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THE  
YOGA OF THE SAINTS  
(ANALYSIS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE)

BY

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FOREWORD

by

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*To*  
*My Spiritual Teacher*

## PREFACE

This book is substantially the same as my ~~thesis~~ which was accepted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the University of Bombay in 1941. To Prof. A. K. Trivedi of Baroda, under whom I had the privilege of working as a post-graduate research student, I owe a special word of thanks ; he was truly a guide and a friend to me during the years of our close association.

My debt to Prof. R. D. Ranade is immense. A mystic himself and not alone a close student of mysticism, he has by precept and example enabled me to make my " Analysis of Spiritual Life " as authentic and complete as possible. He has besides placed me under a great obligation to him by writing a generous Foreword to this book.

My indebtedness to Prof. R. H. Thouless and to William James in the second and third chapters respectively is too obvious to require any special emphasis here.

I have also pleasure in thanking my friends, Mr. Ganesh V. Tulpule and Dr. M. A. Karandikar, who kindly discussed with me some of the knotty problems dealt with in the book ; the Rev. F. H. Brown and Prof. T. Reuben, who went through the typescript and offered valuable suggestions ; Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, whose personal interest in the book was not a little responsible for its publication ; and the Manager and Staff of the British India Press and Mr. G. R. Bhatkal of the Popular Book Depot for facilitating the printing and publication of the book.

Finally, I acknowledge my indebtedness to the University of Bombay for the grant-in-aid received by me from the University towards the cost of publication of this book.

LINGARAJ COLLEGE,  
BELGAUM.

V. H. DATE

28th January 1944.



## FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in writing this Foreword to Dr. Date's work on the Analysis of Spiritual Experience. This work in its original form he had submitted for the Ph.D. Degree of the Bombay University, and I am glad to learn that the University conferred the degree on him after a careful scrutiny. Dr. Date has profited greatly by his studies in contemporary Psychology, Ethics, Mahārāshtra Mysticism, and Indian and European philosophy generally. One of the particular characteristics of the work is the freedom with which the author expresses his opinions. They may occasionally seem dogmatic to certain readers, but it must be remembered that they are the outcome of his own deep conviction and personal experience. Dr. Date has studied particularly works on the Psychology of Religion which have helped him greatly in the denouement of his work. His discussion of the two conversions, the moral and the spiritual, as well as the two Dark Nights, one the pre-illuminational and the other the post-illuminational, is very interesting. The moral bearing of Spiritual Experience has particularly attracted the attention of Dr. Date, and his treatment of the effect of God-vision and the Ideal Saint as depicted in the religious literature and tradition of Mahārāshtra is particularly interesting. The evident care and attention which his supervisor Prof. A. K. Trivedi bestowed upon the thesis while it was in progress has certainly left its mark upon its production. When Dr. Date is discussing the method which he wishes to follow in his work (Chap. I), one is insensibly reminded of similar discussions as *e.g.*, by Prof. Taylor only as applied to the subject of Spiritual

Experience. When Dr. Date discusses the nature of Religious Belief (Chap. II), a host of writers on that subject come before our mind's eye. Of particular value is Dr. Date's discussion of the points of difference between Pātañjalā-yoga and Bhakti-yoga (Chap. V). His treatment of the nature of the object of Spiritual Experience (Chap. VIII) is also very illuminating. Dr. Date is the master of a style, all his own. His phrasing is very often happy though one could sometimes wish a change here or a change there. Altogether Dr. Date has produced a work which will command our respect. I have no doubt that it makes a contribution to recent discussions on the subject of the Philosophy and Psychology of Religion and I wish it every success.

R. D. RANADE.

ALLAHABAD,

*16th January 1944.*

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## CHAPTER I

### AIM AND METHOD

#### I

THE aim of the following pages is to show that the spiritual life is an organic growth, which has its roots in the reactions of the sensuous life and its fruit in the realization of God. Rare is the person who is thoroughly and always satisfied with the perceptible, sensuous world ; rare is the person who thinks but is not troubled with the contradictions and perplexities of thought and life ; rare again a person who is torn internally and externally, but says without complaint or despair that in a godless world of chance and accident, one has to steer one's course as best one can. Sympathetic thought and actual suffering do take a man beyond the meshes of the senses, and bring him face to face with the fundamental problems of philosophy. If sympathy, thought and suffering continue to penetrate his soul, he goes beyond mere philosophizing and begins to feel the thirst for a life which will console him and save him from the turmoils of the worldly life. The reactions of the sensuous life do not stop at merely creating a distaste for

the worldly and a thirst for the non-worldly or the spiritual life. How to live the amphibious life of sense and spirit becomes a new problem to solve. In the fullness of time, the way to this knowledge of the Spirit is 'revealed' definitely as an act of grace from above. Silently and increasingly the soul makes continuous efforts in her struggle to meet the Lord. Taking the wings of morality and meditation, she hastens to meet Him, but finds herself unable to remain constantly with Him, so long as she retains her separate individuality. Ultimately, she makes a complete surrender of herself; but once she meets Him, He alone remains and there is no returning for her.

Such, in brief, is the outline of the story we are going to tell. It may be said that it has been told times without number and that there is no necessity for us to do so once again. We plead guilty to the charge so far as the material of the story is concerned. We have frankly and freely made use of the vast amount of spiritual literature of the saints in Mahārāshtra, but we submit that the structure created out of it ought to appear solid, simple and inviting.

We are aware of our internal and external foes. The latter have doubted and rejected the facts of religious experience on several grounds. Religion, they say, is due to fear; it confuses natural phenomena with gods; it

is nothing but anthropomorphism ; it consists mainly of illusions, aberrations and abnormalities ; it is a way of satisfying the sex instinct ; it stands as a symbol of superstition, is incompatible with science, and even consists of deliberate lies and hypocrisy. Our friends and admirers, too, unconsciously act the role of internal enemies, because they speak without knowledge, confuse superstition with fact, and the simulating with the real. We shall try to refute all these charges against religion and religious experience by pointing out unambiguously and definitely that we are dealing with facts and not with chimeras.

Our present study is neither hortatory nor apologetic ; it is a rationalistic, critical, though sympathetic, examination of the facts of spiritual experience as recorded by the saints, with a view to finding out the real and the abiding in that experience. And inasmuch as the Real from the metaphysical point of view is also the Real from the experiential point of view, we are also concerned with the pointing out of the practical way in which the Real, as the Ideal, will gradually be realized. In other words, we shall deal, first, with the philosophical problem of the nature of spiritual experience, and find out the criteria by which the mystical Reality will be distinguished from the non-mystical or pseudo-mystical mass of experiences ; secondly, with the equally important psychological problem of the develop-

ment or the growth of spiritual life; and thirdly, with the moral and other preparation for, as well as with the characteristic marks of the saintly life. "The Analysis of Spiritual Life" will therefore be dealt with from three points of view, philosophical, psychological and ethical. This attempt to present the structure, the mechanism and the function of the spiritual or mystical life is, we think, with the exception of Professor R. D. Ranade's most worthy and monumental work on "Mysticism in Mahārāshtra," probably the first of its kind in India. The West has produced a vast literature on the philosophy and psychology of Religion; and it is a matter of great regret that, as yet, no serious attempt has been made in this field to present the Indian point of view in a manner which is at once unbiased, critical and scholarly

## II

Those who consider that religion is altogether a social phenomenon may do well in adopting the method of statistical averages or the questionnaire method in discussing some such problems as, whether conversion is an adolescent phenomenon or not, whether religion and magic are the same in essence or different. Ames, Jevons and Durkheim, for instance, take this view of religion. To quote Prof. Ames, "Religion is the consciousness of

the highest social values."<sup>1</sup> However useful it may be to consider religion as having a social origin, one sure consequence of it is that the social origin itself is used as a proof that religion today is an anachronism; that the collective consciousness in which religion originated is, as Conford holds, on a plane much lower than reason.<sup>2</sup> Pratt himself admits the possibility of the rise of religious ideals and feelings in the individual without the intervention of social influence, and illustrates it in the case of two deaf-mutes, Mr. Ballard and Mr. D'Estrella. The latter, Pratt tells us, thought the moon to be a ball of fire which some strong man, who was somehow hiding behind the skies, tossed up every morning and caught in the evening by way of amusement.

It would be idle and impossible in our present study to bring under review and advance criticism against what these social psychologists have written about religious problems. They have, many of them, left the grain and pounded the husk. To us, religion being primarily a direct personal affair with God, the social problems appear to have value only as a background and an environment. Man being a social animal is certainly indebted to society for the opportunities he gets to show his moral and spiritual worth. But on no account can it be said that the personal life of communion

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<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 168 (quoted by Pratt).

<sup>2</sup> *From Religion to Philosophy*.



with God or of ecstasy is a social function, or that the distinction between the sacred and the profane is a social distinction. The real object of worship is always God or the God-like man, and never the society as Durkheim wishes to make it. For society is composed of good and bad men, of saints, sinners and unbelievers; and though it sounds well and is a fine manner of speaking that we should worship God in the form of society, the fallacy which is often committed is to worship the society (and we wonder if this would be possible without the prior worship of God) and to forget God. As Rāmādāsa tells us, we must make the distinction between the ordinary man and the man who has realized God. To be truly useful to society after one has realized God, or to derive the social benefit for one's own moral and spiritual preparation is one thing; to deny and forget Him by being fired with the enthusiasm of social consciousness and of physical health is quite another thing.

The religious or the spiritual life mainly consists of the internal apprehension of God and the silent contemplation on His name. Obviously the statistical or the questionnaire method is useless to find Him out or to solve the various problems which arise in connection with this unique life. If the questionnaire is at all to be addressed, it must be addressed to the saints; but they are not to be found in numbers and in a particular place which is

accessible to all. The presence of a saint is a rare phenomenon; the discovery of him is rarer still. The only way in which we can discover the secrets of the spiritual life is carefully to study the literature of the saints, and then, by applying the comparative method, to discover the facts of that life and to formulate out of them a philosophy and a psychology of religion. It is by comparing the experiences of different saints similar or identical, that we can have greater evidence for arriving at a particular conclusion. If the identity of ideas is discovered amidst diversity in other respects, such as those due to age, clime, language, etc., we have the greatest evidence for the truth of those ideas. For example, if the saying of Tukārāma, "We have to fight day and night", is compared with a very similar saying of St. Paul, "I die daily", we get the conviction that the spiritual life must be a life of perpetual struggle. The more the comparison the more the freedom from subjective prejudices, and the more the objective validity we have regarding the facts of spiritual life. In the words of Stanley Cook, we get "the unbiased co-ordination of all the comparable data irrespective of context or age."<sup>1</sup> Again, as the spiritual experience too is amenable to growth, evolution and organization, we shall employ the genetic method also. In the absence, however, of

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion, Vol. X, p. 664.

one's own experience, it will be most difficult to employ this method and say with confidence anything about the different stages of spiritual growth. How far we have been successful in this our attempt is not for us to say.

There is no room to incorporate discussions about some of the outstanding problems of philosophy. We shall say almost nothing, for instance, one way or the other, regarding the problems of "life after death", "reincarnation" and "the theory of Karma". Much can be guessed and said about them on either side. We are concerned with the facts of the spiritual life and with no guessings regarding matters which hardly touch that life. This may perhaps offend some of the best Indian intellects who pin their faith above all to the sayings of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, that He and Arjuna had gone through many previous births, and that perfection is possible after a number of births. The saints too have occasionally spoken in the same strain, but the motive is to make the people (and this is the motive of the Bhagavadgītā, too) all the more spiritually-minded, and thus enable them to try to live the really immortal life of God-realization and thereby put a stop to the round of births and the bondage of Karma. The beliefs in the doctrines of rebirth and Karma have been utilized by the saints as spurs for the progress of the moral and the spiritual life, and not allowed to endure as mere strongholds of Indian

Philosophy. They may be valuable as pointing to some objective validity corresponding to them; but they are—whether beliefs or make-beliefs—of the utmost value as means to an end. At the dissolution of the universe, there will be the Brahmanic state for all; but who would like, asks Rāmadāsa, to become a king when all the armies are dead? Rather, one would enjoy the kingdom when everything else is existing. Rāmadāsa goes to the extent of saying that the hard cash-value of the Brahmanic experience, which can be had in this very life, is incomparably superior to the possible, shaky, credit-value of the same, in a distant life to come.

In his book "The Idea of Immortality", Professor Pringle-Pattison rightly argues that the highest ethical conceptions are independent of all considerations of future rewards and punishments; and he tries to prove this by pointing out that the high moral standard of the Old Testament or of the Stoics was possible without any belief in a future life. "From the point of view of psychology," as W. B. Selbie points out, "the really significant fact is the tendency to see in the hope of immortality, a moral incentive and a means of redressing the many imperfections and injustices of this mortal life"<sup>1</sup>. If we are hardly justified in assuming that, in the absence of a belief in a future life, the whole moral foundation of

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<sup>1</sup> Psychology of Religion Ch. XIV. •

the universe will crumble to pieces, much less shall we be justified in assuming that without such belief there will be no spiritual life. On the contrary, our beliefs in a future life and, consequently, in the theory of Karma, owe all their strength and value to another logically prior belief in the permanence and reality of certain spiritual values, such as Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

It may appear that we have assumed the existence of God. For the purpose of our thesis, it does not matter whether we believe or disbelieve in Him, though it is indeed desirable to believe. It is immaterial whether the merit of a physician is believed or not by the patient; it is sufficient if he takes the medicine, provided, of course, it is vouchsafed that it will cure the malady and conduce to health. Even so, an aspirant who wishes to know God but does not believe in Him, can realize the life of the Spirit, provided he follows the instructions of the spiritual teacher. He will realize God; and in the act of realization will lie his argument and proof for the existence of God. The so-called arguments of God can be met with antinomies as every student of philosophy knows; but the experience of God will be the only proof without any contradiction, at least for him who has that experience. The spiritual life is a great experiment, in the data, the procedure and the method of which one must have an initial faith, as is required in

testing any scientific hypothesis. In the process of that experiment itself and not at the end alone, as is the case with the experiments of science, one begins to realize that "to know God is to become God."

### III

It is widely supposed that the psychoanalysts consider religious consciousness as sexual in essence. William James has once for all pointed out conclusively in his "Varieties of Religious Experience" that the two kinds of consciousness are diametrically opposed to each other in respect of objects, moods, faculties and acts. Professor R. D. Ranade has also conclusively pointed out in his "Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy." that the sexual pleasure can never be the unit of a Beatific calculus. He holds that the relation between the religious and the sexual consciousness is only analogical.

It should be noted that the libidinous energy is one form of universal energy and not the whole of it. That is why the sex-impulse is capable of being sublimated and transformed for the service of God. This is how Kānhopātrā could transfer her love to God. The spiritual energy, too, if not kept under control, may seek to get itself released with force and speed; and just as water takes its most natural and easy course, similarly the spiritual energy may

find an easy outlet through the sexual apparatus. That is why some of those who have gone high on the spiritual ladder fall suddenly and violently.

The sex-instinct is the greatest urge in human life. It must to a certain extent at least be satisfied before one can ordinarily expect some progress in spiritual life; and yet, progress in spiritual life is possible only when the sexual appetite is brought under control. Rāmadāsa tells us in clear terms that one, who has developed aversion (Vairāgya) in respect of objects of sense (including sex), can alone hope to have spiritual knowledge, and warns us in equally definite terms that if anyone, being deluded by the false impression that he has attained to liberation, were to lose control of his senses and indulge in pleasures, he would never be free from the torments of the mind. Apart from its being a great counsel to us in the moral field, this utterance of Rāmadāsa serves the purpose of bringing to our minds the fact that the sexual and the spiritual are two entirely different urges, which pull the mind as in a game of tug-of-war, in opposite directions. The gain in the one is the loss in the other, and *vice versa*; so that, on no account can we have a general assimilation and an equation of the two, in their respective functional values.

The mind, says Rāmadāsa in another place, ascends or descends spiritual-ward or sensual-

ward, according as it becomes identical with the spiritual complex or the sensual complex. And again, he says, in another context, that the one thing about which great caution is to be exercised by the person who performs Kīrtana is to have absolutely no reference to sexual matters; for in that very moment, the audience too will be sexually-minded. Without any hesitation, the saints have unambiguously proclaimed to the world that excepting the necessary, moderate satisfaction of the sexual desire which is guaranteed by the institution of marriage, any further indulgence in it in any form of it by word, thought or deed, is absolutely taboo in the spiritual life. They advocate the ruthless suppression and the burning of the sexual passion by the fire of meditation, if it outgrows the legitimate, moderate demands. They are not apprehensive like the psycho-analysts who fear that the suppressed emotions may gather strength in the antechamber of the mind and surge up with explosive force in the consciousness in moments of weakness. From the view-point of the saints, there need be no such fear in suppressing the exuberance of the sex-instinct. For in the first place, it is to be buried deep; secondly, the mind has a substitute to think about; it is given to meditation; thirdly, the meditation itself releases such an amount of spiritual energy as is able not only to counterbalance the sexual, but to absorb and utilize it for its



own progress; and lastly, God Himself cuts the desires of the devotees by His grace. As against this, to give full scope to the free expression of the sexual desires is to put a stop to the spiritual progress.

#### IV

We shall now very briefly discuss the relation of religion with magic, science and art, so far as it is relevant from the point of view of the spiritual life. Otherwise, the topic is so large as to justify the writing of a philosophico-scientific treatise on it.

Both magic and science try to have a control over Nature. To that extent, we may call magic pseudo-science and science "sympathetic" magic. Magic is concerned only with the acquisition of power; science both with knowledge and power. Science is concerned with the extension of the range of the knowableness of the universe; magic is indifferent to this question. Like magic and science, religion too is concerned with the acquisition of power and knowledge; but it is the Divine power and knowledge, and not the physical or psychical. The control of nature is not sought at all; though sometimes, a sort of objective control and supernatural powers, resembling the occult, come of their own accord as by-products of a life of intense and unceasing devotion to God. Every great saint is reported to have caused miracles; but

as Rāmādāsa tells us, it is not the saint who performs them; they occur by the grace of God. Similarly, once the saint knows the nature of the universe, it matters very little for him, if the range of its knowableness increases or decreases in dimensions. The nature of mystical reality will have no corresponding changes. God, he knows by experience, is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. As we shall see in detail, in the chapter on "The Nature of Spiritual Experience", there is nothing in common between the physical object and the spiritual object. Again, from the point of view of science, the object of science is something which is perpetually "other" than the subject; from the point of view of religion, the object though remaining as the "other" is also one with the subject. The subject itself becomes its own object. Further, the object of spiritual experience is capable of producing emotional reactions; the object of science may yield only intellectual pleasure. Peace in God, the grace of God, and the Beatific raptures are unknown to science.

Art appears to come very near to religion, on account of its creative instinct and imaginative faculty; and, when the word "intuition" is substituted for the instinct and the faculty, it becomes very easy to say that art and religion are one and the same thing. We have to point out that religion has nothing to do with imagination; on the contrary, imagination

is the hall-mark of unreality. Again, it can hardly be said that the spiritual object is created; it is only a discovery or a recognition of what is only potentially cognized. The intuitive faculty of mystical religion is dormant in all, but roused in the case of a few by the grace of God. The intuitive faculty of art, which is a convenient name for the exceptional fertile imagination or inspiration, is not known to be so awakened by the intervention of another. It is natural with the artist, and is therefore bound to be subjective. The intuition of religion is universal and objective, the same for all.

## CHAPTER II

# RELIGIOUS BELIEF

### I

Religious belief may take two forms: the belief regarding the mere fact about the existence of God, and the belief regarding not only the existence of God but also of the nature of God and the knowability of it. God may simply exist, but may not be known at all, or He may be known in His existence and His nature as well. We are not concerned here with the worn-out, dry discussion of the so-called standard arguments or proofs of God's existence. They only give, as E. Bevan puts it, "rational comfort to people who already believe in God."<sup>1</sup> An agnostic of the Lockean type may also believe in the existence of a being, whose nature he may not know, or may not care to know. We are not concerned merely with this type of belief, which is only an intellectual luxury or pastime. Rather, our interest being in the growing appreciation of and participation in the qualities of God, we are concerned in this chapter with the grounds of justification of our belief in the knowability

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<sup>1</sup> Symbolism and Belief, p. 386.

of His nature or qualities. Now the Divine qualities or the nature of God cannot simply hang in the air; they must belong to a god that exists. Neither can there be any meaning in the bare fact of the existence of God, unless, on account of His qualities or nature, He is related with the moral and the spiritual values of mankind. Our religious belief, in short, if genuine, must go beyond our mere subjective leanings and notions, and point out certain definite facts having an objective validity which can never be doubted at least by those who have an experience of them. At the same time the religious belief must go beyond the mere pragmatic desirableness of the consequences which follow from it; it must be a true belief. "Thus conduct which flows from the belief that God is love," says Bevan, "is not only the best kind of conduct, judged by the scales of human values, but is also the kind of conduct which corresponds best with Reality."<sup>1</sup>

From the view-point of Pragmatism a true belief is that which works, or results in the right sort of conduct. "But the fact that we attain our purposes," says Bevan, "does not prove that the supposition on which we act is true, since a right course of conduct may follow on a false supposition."<sup>2</sup> It is just possible that falsehood may work better, as it does work better with propagandists and sellers

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; p. 300.

of patent medicines, who know nothing about their efficacy. If workability is the test of truth, we are landed in a realm of probability and relativity. The proposition that "God is merciful" may work well for the time being; but in view of the problem of evil, it may be looked upon as only probable. While if we take into consideration the ancient belief in the wrath of God which coerced men into good behaviour, there would be another equally true proposition, *viz.*, "God is wrathful." Now the objective truth of these two propositions remains a matter of indifference, so long as the beliefs in them "work", and are therefore taken for granted as true.

Theism alone believes in a God who possesses a number of qualities and is at the same time a fit object of worship and reverence. But the theistic belief is said to be anthropomorphic in character, and the imputation to God of certain powers and qualities is believed by the critics of theism to be due to human need. "All personal theism is, in a sense, anthropomorphic," says Dr. Farnell; "for we can conceive of God in terms of our own faculties, and in the light of our emotions and our moral, intellectual and spiritual experience."<sup>1</sup> Now if theism is to be reduced to anthropomorphism, and "if you went on with the process and removed from the ideal of God everything which you knew as a characteristic or constituent of

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<sup>1</sup> Attributes of God, pp. 21-22.

human personality, you would have nothing left at all. God would be for you only a blank. It would not be worthwhile your saying that you believed in the existence of God at all, any more than you believed in the existence of 'X.'<sup>1</sup>

If the objectivity of the theistic belief is thus virtually to be condemned and rejected on account of its being anthropomorphic in character, religion will be no better than poetry and art which will give all the emotional thrills and the sense of meaning, even though there is no kind of Reality beyond to which they will point. A religion which consists of mere 'numinous' feeling, however valuable, or a religion which does not point out an immense Reality behind it, is on a par with music which may give us pleasure, but which may mean absolutely nothing. We may have mere intellectual concepts of God, but, really speaking, no God; mere symbols, but no actual truth. The attributes of Potentia, Sapientia and Bonitas, if we are at all to supersede symbols by precise apprehensions and to avoid the pitfalls of agnosticism, pragmatism and anthropomorphism, must signify our belief in a dogma, which, according to McTaggart, has a metaphysical significance.

To save religion both in its dogma and feeling and to be able to speak of God as having attributes as a factual source of the various

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<sup>1</sup> Symbolism and Belief, p. 254.

emotional reactions, we must back up theism by mysticism, a philosophical justification of God by the mystical perception of Him. Only then our religious belief will not be a hazard, but an unerring source of blissful knowledge and action.

Mysticism being the direct, first-hand contact with Reality, any faithful account of that must constitute to the mystic and those who pin their faith in him a body of truth which will never be assailed. Let us consider the same proposition "God is merciful" from the point of view of mysticism. To one who has seen God and has had the fortune of further having an experience of His mercy, and to one who has reason not to doubt the veracity of the first, God and His mercy are not simply matters of blind faith, but of faith based on experience. The belief in the proposition does not mean a belief in a possible or hypothetical God and His mercy of the same type, but means a prior belief of someone who has had the actual experience of a real God and a real mercy, and a posterior belief of other men who have sufficient reason not to doubt the veracity of the person who had that experience. For St. Paul who saw the vision on the road to Damascus as being "brighter than the glare of the sun", and who became convinced by hearing an equally objective voice that the vision was no other than the Christ, the facts of God and of His grace were actual appre-



hensions and not merely inferential conjectures. And again to those readers of the Bible, who see no reason to bring in question the veracity of St. Paul, the experience represented by the words "brighter than the glare, etc," is almost, if not equally, as objectively real as it was to Paul. With Paul's experience admitted as a basic fact, with the vision and the voice as mystical Reality, the meaning of the expression "brighter than the glare of the sun" is believed in by the readers of the Bible as more than empty symbolism or the frenzy of the brain. But if the experiential support of the mystic is taken away, the belief is likely to shatter into pieces, and the expression regarding the experience will only appear as a fine piece of verbal imagery, corresponding to and transcending which there may or may not be any Reality. The imagery as a work of art may be highly pleasing and useful too, but may connote nothing in reality.

Take away the experiences of the mystics who have recorded them from the earliest times of human history all over the world, take away the visions and the voices due to which the mystics tell us authoritatively of the various attributes of God, such as Beauty, Power, Glory, Wisdom, Mercy, Grace, Love, Goodness, etc., and theism, in spite of its brilliant speculative adventures, will have absolutely no answer to the charge of anthropomorphism which is often levelled against it, *viz.*, the theistic attri-

butes of God are nothing but the human attributes raised to the degree of perfection. This charge appears to us as the deadliest of all; for anthropomorphism does not straightway deny or doubt the existence of God as scepticism or agnosticism does, but silently and under the garb of an ally cuts away the very foundations of theism, by first allowing a man to worship God and to admire the Divine attributes and then blaming him for doing honour to a being who is fashioned after the image of man. It would not serve any purpose simply to say that the charge is unintelligent. As a matter of fact, without the basis of mystical experience, theism has no answer to this charge. It remains unrefuted ever since it was put forth so admirably by Xenophanes. "If oxen and horses had hands, and could paint with their hands and produce works of art as men do," says the Greek philosopher, "horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen paint like oxen."<sup>1</sup> If at all we wish to refute it, we can only hope to do so with reference to what the mystics have said; for the mystics have the authority of experience for what they say.

The traditional, bitter voice of anthropomorphism will be silenced once for all, and the theistic belief upheld as durable for all time to come, if, in the light of mystical knowledge, a new meaning is discovered out of the old phraseology of anthropomorphism. If the

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<sup>1</sup> Burnet: Early Greek Philosophy, p. 119.

attributes of God are imagined to be after the fashion of the attributes of man, the charge of anthropomorphism will remain forever without an answer. But if the same are considered as mere pointers to the supra-sensuous, undefinable aspects of God, constituting mystical experience, but which are, somehow, for the sake of intellectual apprehension and social communication, represented by the inadequate but workable human language and imagery, then anthropomorphism is a bulwark of theism and the expression of nothing but truth. We must learn to distinguish henceforth anthropomorphism of the imaginative type from anthropomorphism of the representative type. The one imagines a god and his qualities which may or may not exist, the other gives a faithful, though poor, representation of the mystical experience. Mere imagination may not lead us to God but to the devil; the faithful representation has no other choice but to fall back upon the experience of the mystic. It is the description of what is remembered as having been experienced actually by either the person who describes the qualities of God or by another on whose report we can rely with confidence. The description of God and His qualities which have been matters of first-hand, direct experience, differs from the description of God based on imagination, to the extent to which introspection or retrospection differs from prospective or speculative guesswork.

Accordingly, if the author of the Bhagavad-gītā depicts in energetic language the vision of the Universal Ātman, consisting of innumerable eyes, hands, etc., as extremely terrific and attractive, and as varied in forms and colours, it is not the imaginative, poetic type of anthropomorphism, but rather the realistic, representative type which is responsible for acquainting us with the nature of mystical knowledge. It is not the human quality of mercy or cruelty that is first raised in imagination to the highest degree and then conceived to belong to a supreme and powerful being, imagined and called God; but it is rather the Divine attribute of grace or wrath which becomes first a matter of experience, and then, for the sake of understanding, is mentioned in human language as love or anger. That is why the mystic alone speaks as certainly of the wrath, the cruelty and the terrific aspects of God, as of love, mercy and the pleasing aspects of Him. It is not the fancy of man which describes God as one who loves and protects the good, or as one who being wrathful destroys the wicked; it is rather the description of the experience of the fact that He behaves so. Arjuna, for example, is convinced of the fact that God is both fearful and loving, because he actually saw in the vision of the Universal Ātman that his foes were being crushed in the terrible jaws of Death, while he himself was assured by the vision that he alone would be

saved on account of his devotion. The author of the "Saptaśatī" has described the goddess as one who has mercy in Her heart, but who exhibits Her fierce nature and cruelty on the field of battle.

The propositions, therefore, that "God is merciful", "God is wrathful", "God takes the form of Viṣṇu with four hands", "God appears as a swan, or as a star, a cross, crescent moon, a hog, a lion, a horse, etc," may not, as Xenophanes suggests, be anthropomorphic in character, because they embody the idealization of an imagined form or quality of God, but may very likely be the approximate crystallization in intellectual form and language of a truth which must have been experienced by the mystics. If the name is to be retained at all, it will be altogether a new kind of anthropomorphism, whose function will be not to imagine but faithfully to represent what has been experienced. We may designate this new kind of anthropomorphism by coining a new word, *viz.*, "Mysticomorphism", just as Canon Streever has coined the new word "Mechanomorphism" to designate Materialism or the attempt to fashion the infinite in the image of a machine.<sup>1</sup> To sum up, it is this new form of anthropomorphism or Mysticomorphism which saves us from scepticism on one hand, and hollow theism on the other, and grounds our religious belief on the mystical experience of the saints.

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<sup>1</sup> Reality, p. 9.

II<sup>1</sup>

Let us now examine the elements which go to form the religious belief of the ordinary man and see how far they are sound and free from danger.

*The Traditional Element*

When there is no reasoned demonstration of a belief, the usual way in which it is transmitted is by means of some authority. Whether the authority is of the elderly persons in the family, or of teachers in schools, or of prominent people in the society, or of some religious head, the mind receives certain suggestions which, in course of time, are hardened into a belief. The mind, too, becomes increasingly suggestible, and, as Dr. Rivers has pointed out, responds immediately and unquestionably to the commands of the authority just as the soldiers do when their suggestibility is heightened by the military drill.

This mode of maintaining a belief by means of authoritative suggestion and unquestioned obedience in response to it is highly useful in bringing the members of a group under one person or in binding them together by a common idea or group of ideas. The important point, however, is that the binding

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<sup>1</sup> The five-fold classification of the religious belief is that of R. H. Thouless, though the treatment is different here.

force does not lie, as is falsely believed, in merely the superficial points, such as the virtue of obedience or the force of suggestion, but in the central fact of the truth of the idea itself, which is known to the person in authority but mostly unknown to the followers. The soldiers obey the general and carry out his command. It is necessary, indeed, that the soldiers should be obedient, and the general powerful and unhesitating in giving the command. And yet, if the command be detrimental to the cause of the soldiers, the general and the country for which they fight, it may not continue to be obeyed for a long time, except for fear of death. There will be a revolt in the army, the moment it is discovered that the command embodies a false plan and is not consistent with the ideas of patriotism and duty. The passive acceptance of the voice of authority is possible, so long as those who command and those who obey are bound by the common idea, because the truth embodied by it is the common objective which is dear to them all. Those who command have realized it; those who obey have to realize it and hope to do so by relying upon their superiors.

This will to realize that which has been realized by the superiors is the secret of belief in authority, of hero-worship, of the traditional form of religion. So long as power and knowledge combine in a particular person or institution,

there is smooth sailing in spite of inequality; but the moment there is cleavage between the idea and the power necessary to enforce it upon others for a common good, there appear the signs of revolt. The ideas, instead of being the symbols of some objective truth, become mere empty shells, and yet are felt to be so dear on account of custom or tradition, that persons or institutions in authority are tempted to protect them with fanatic zeal, even using physical force. This was exactly how the Papal authority was overthrown; this is exactly how people who have a respect for the autonomy of their own character revolt against those who abuse their power in the attempt to preserve the dead skeletons of ideas from which truth has escaped.

So far as religion is concerned, mysticism alone cannot be rusted by tradition, and so can wield a powerful influence on all. For it alone combines symbolism with truth. If it further combines with these the physical power of the State and the moral and intellectual powers of the Church, there will reign a Theo-polity on this very earth. The torch of mystical knowledge will be handed down from the teacher to the disciple as if by tradition, and be kept permanently burning. The Reality and the symbols of it will be kept so closely together, that the Reality will not be lost sight of in the idle pursuit of the symbols; nor will they be utilized for the



purpose of coercing the ignorant into blind following. They will never be overworked and so lead to a rebellion in religion, if they be shown them by a person who has the authority of experience to point out a Reality beyond.

### *The Natural Element*

That Nature is the garment of God, the mirror in which you see His reflection or image, has been the persistent argument of philosophy and poetry. That Nature itself is God, that natural beauty is Divine beauty, that the appreciation of the beauty of the face of a woman is the appreciation of the beauty of God, are further extensions of the same argument. Originally there arises some vague but wholesome feeling at the sight of the beauty of Nature; and, as Thouless points out, this serves as the raw material out of which the belief in a God that satisfies the aesthetic sense is produced. The belief is then dissociated from the feeling in which it arises, and takes on an intellectual form either at the hands of a philosopher, or a poet. But as we have observed before in this chapter, the belief of the philosopher even of the theistic type, or of the poet, may have either mere dogma or mere feeling, and may thus shatter itself to pieces if it be no more than anthropomorphism. In the case of the poet, especially, who is merely struck

by the beauty and bounty of Nature, the intellectual mould of his feeling is still more unsound.

The danger inherent in this aspect of the religious belief, which is not based on mystical experience but on a mere poetic feeling, may well be brought out by a passage from Thouless's "Introduction to the Psychology of Religion", Ch. III.: "To the unreflective man, healthy in mind and body and not much burdened by ultimate moral problems, the optimistic attitude is a natural one. For him there is no conflict when he sees Nature as the face of God. The matter is however different with the sensitive soul of the Buddha, tortured by the sight of the misery and cruelty of the world, or of St. Paul acutely conscious of sin in himself and mankind. To such mentalities Nature is not good. For them the experiences we are describing (*viz.*, of having intimate personal relations of awe and love with Nature) would come into conflict with the stronger experience of the pain and evil."

The mystic alone has the capacity to go beyond these apparent conflicts and to formulate his belief, if he philosophizes at all, on the strength of his synoptic, persistent and transcendent experience of God. Both the beautiful and the ugly and the lovable and formidable aspects of Nature are reconciled in the mystical belief, because the mystical Reality is found by the mystic as presenting these elements in it.

*The Moral Element*

The experience of the moral conflict, according to Thouless, tends to result in religious belief in two ways: firstly, by "objectifying the two sides" of the conflict, *viz.*, the good and the evil, into a God and a Devil respectively; and secondly, by being driven by the "practical necessity of keeping men good," into conceiving God as a moral Lawgiver and Governor of the Universe.

The weakness of this aspect of religious belief does not lie, as is very often said, in making God an external authority, as if authority and compulsion from outside have something bad about them, but in the identification of God with moral goodness. No doubt prominent psychologists like James and Coe attach a high importance to the moral element in religion. James especially finds himself absolutely unable to understand a conception of religion in which the ideal is not a moral one at all. As a matter of fact, if religion is indifferent to morality why should we need religion at all? To treat God as the highest sanction of morality is certainly a wholesome attitude of the mind. But what of those who lead an exceptionally good moral life, because they need it to satisfy their conscience, or because they treat it as a part of the social adjustment? To those who do not believe in a life to come, which will be adjusted and

balanced by the Divine interference, but who derive all their sanction for morality in the individual and the social conscience and the mutual adjustment of the members of a society, the belief in a watchful and just God is a superfluous though not an absurd notion of the mind. From this point of view there is neither a moral element in religion, nor a religious element in morality. The two beliefs, if genuine, ought to stand separately, or fall separately, if not genuine. This is again another extreme, to think of religion and morality as absolutely divorced from each other.

The profound sense of the moral law written in the human heart led Kant to believe in the implicitly ethical character of religion. He felt that the reason for this belief was practical rather than theoretical; and it was such an unshakable belief of Kant that he thought it was impossible for him to conceive of any religious experience which was devoid of the moral one. And yet, as Clement C. J. Webb points out, Kant contradicts himself: "His own sentiment towards the sublimities and ingenuities of nature really implied the existence of something other than what is distinctively ethical."<sup>1</sup>

Kant is accused of having committed a logical contradiction; but he could not help doing so, in view of the practical nature of his moral belief. It was this practical insight

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<sup>1</sup> Kant's Philosophy of Religion, p. 205.

into the nature of the moral law and of religion that saved him and the world from scepticism and nihilism. From the mystical point of view Kānt's error will be all the more justified. The moral goodness is only a part of the nature of God. Power, Wisdom, Wrath, Beauty, are, for example, attributes which go beyond the province of ethical values. Even the goodness of a good man is an infinitesimal part of the goodness of God. "Can the love of God be compared with the love of a mother?" asks Rāmadāsa. "The mother may kill the baby in times of difficulty; God will never do so with His devotee."<sup>1</sup> Experience of the mystical Reality as good is the only ground on which the moral belief can be justified.

Let us consider the point in another form. The moral consciousness does involve the sense of being alive to sin; and to a certain extent the consciousness of actually being, or of the possibility of being, a sinner, has a high moral value. But "an exaggerated horror of sin" is not desirable from the view-point of spiritual progress. For, as Thouless puts it, it "tends to produce an unhealthy and morbid attitude of mind which fails to be an incentive to goodness."<sup>2</sup> There comes into operation the "law of Reversed Effort" by which the remedy itself becomes an obstacle, or the idea or plan which we wish to cherish or execute defeats itself, on

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<sup>1</sup> Dāsabodha, IV.—8, 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to Psychology of Religion, Ch. IV.

account of the emotional reactions against it. The very idea that one may fall from a height, says Thouless, and the very effort to save oneself may precipitate the fall. Similarly, too keen a consciousness of sin may not relieve the person from his sins at all, as was probably the case with Bunyan.

This unduly exaggerated consciousness of sin suggests the lack of faith in the qualities of mercy and power of God and of God-like persons. The religious belief suffers in quality to the extent to which this extreme consciousness of sin becomes a part of our moral consciousness. In order to ward off this danger latent in the moral element of the religious belief, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives us assurances like: "Even a sinner of the extreme degree, if he only meditates on Me, should be considered as a good person; for he is on the path;"<sup>1</sup> "Surrender unto Me; I shall relieve thee of all thy sins." The saints too have again and again told us that mountains of sins will be burnt by the power of meditation. Meditation on God and the consequent grace of God do away with the need of repentance for the sins. This does not mean that repentance is not considered as a necessary and useful part of the moral consciousness; it only means that repentance is not the exclusive sign of religious belief. Too much repentance without meditation indicates nothing but weakness and lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Bhagavadgītā IX, 30; XVIII, 66.

faith in God.

*The Affective Element*

There is undoubtedly the emotive aspect of religious experience and belief. But distinction must be made between the emotions and sentiments which accompany or are the results of facts of experience, and those which arise merely in connection with religious cult and practices but do not necessarily indicate the presence of any such facts. The posture of kneeling in prayer, for example, has its effect on the emotions. It is not merely an outward symbol of submission, but, as Thouless points out, "it actually tends to produce the emotional attitude of submission."<sup>1</sup> However highly serviceable for social purposes the intensification of emotional experience by such practices may be in the life of a religious person without the actual presence of any object, it is probable that it may degenerate into mere sentimentalism, which may lead him to no action. The example given by William James of the Russian lady is a typical one of such sentimentalism. She wept over the troubles of fictitious people on the stage, while her own coachman was freezing to death on the pavement outside. The emotion of sorrow was to her an enjoyable state of mind; it did not stir her to action.

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Psychology of Religion, Ch. V.

And again the emotions roused in the religious field must mainly be useful in that field rather than in another. If the act of kneeling enables us to know God and be submissive before Him, then it serves its purpose; if it only enables us to serve the society, without knowing God, there is no sense in saying that it is a religious act. On the contrary, if a saint prostrates himself before God, because he has been so fortunate as to have a glimpse of His glory, he too experiences the intensification of the emotional attitude of submission, but there is no fear for him that the emotional energy will be soon dissipated into nothing. God being the permanent object of his devotion, his emotions too will be as steadfast as they will be intense, and they will be permanently and fruitfully utilized for his spiritual as well as for social welfare. In his case, the experience of God, however small, will serve as a nucleus round which the emotions will gradually organise themselves and form into sentiments and character. Without such a tangible nucleus, the emotions will, every one of them, live a separate life, and be dissipated into nothing.

The mere feeling of the presence of God, of which we read in abundance in the mystical literature of the West, is no doubt a source of joy and comfort to the person who feels such a presence. But how long will one feeling be the support of another feeling, when both of them must, if we wish to maintain their per-



manence, be based on some concrete, permanent fact of experience? If there be no actual perception of God, the mere feeling of the presence of God, however strong and inevitable and however wholesome and joyful, may end in a mere religious sentimentalism which will be no stimulus to action or thought.

### *The Rational Element*

The work of reason in all the human departments of knowledge is so obvious that it is superfluous to say that the intellect has an intimate relation with religious belief. It may be contended in keeping with the tendency of modern psychology that our beliefs are determined for us far more by irrational forces than by the intellect. Our feelings, wishes and emotions, as well as a host of unconscious desires and impulses, are responsible for all that we believe. No doubt, there is an element of truth in this contention. Yet, on no account does it minimize the work of reason, which consists in formulating the justification or proof of what we believe. The genesis of our beliefs may lie in irrational sources; and yet, the justification and the maintenance of them, as well as the refutation of counter-beliefs or no-beliefs, is the work of reason. As against this, it may be said again that a person who has the ground of experience for his belief, may not require the intellect to prove his belief for him. Yet, so

long as there is social intercourse and the need for argumentation, so long as books are being written and lectures are being delivered, the intellect will function without any challenge.

Those however who run to the other extreme and say that reason alone is sufficient to deliver the goods, and believe in a rational type of religion, are, as Thouless says, "in a worse position than the devils". In the words of St. James, such people "believe and tremble".<sup>1</sup> The merely rational believer is, in fact, indifferent to his belief.

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Psychology of Religion, Ch. VI.

## CHAPTER III

# SENSUAL TO SPIRITUAL

### I

THE argument of the last chapter has convinced us that the genuine lasting belief in God is ultimately grounded in the experience of God, and that any other type of belief, whether induced by an appeal to the sense of natural beauty, or good will, or created by ratiocination or traditional instruction, has at best some pragmatic value so far as it "works", so far as it provides us with a social structure as governed and supervised by an omniscient moral being. Now such a belief, as grounded in intuitive knowledge of God, is given to a very few; innumerable others have only a sort of hazardous belief which has utility, but corresponding to which they are unable to tell whether there exists or not a factual reality. How then is the common run of people to attain to the right belief in God ?

It is often said that you must have faith in order to know God. Faith is just another name for belief. Hence, to say that the experience of God is due to an act of faith and that real faith or belief is due to an experience of God,

is to argue in a circle. Truly, a man cannot enter into water unless he is able to swim, and swimming is impossible without entering into water. And yet, it is truer to say that if a man really wants to swim, he must overcome the theoretical difficulty of the argument by actually entering into the water. Similarly, one who wants to know God must begin somewhere by an initial act of faith. It does not matter even if the initial step is due to blind credulity. One has to accept it tentatively or provisionally, just as a student of science accepts a hypothesis for the sake of proving or disproving it.

This provisional, initial act of faith is the bridge that connects the sensual with the spiritual life; it is the point of new departure in life, and constitutes the essence of religious conversion. The various ways in which the faith arises and the conversion takes place, the nature of the new life as preceded by the Dark Night of the soul, and the meaning of the spiritual threshold as indicated by the meeting of the Guru, will be the topics of our present discussion.

Why at all, let us first see, is the spiritual life sought? What are the motives which induce one to seek it? The hope of a heaven or a paradise with all the beautiful and precious things in it after death is a motive not of spiritual life, but of an extension of sensual life, more exalted and rich than the one we are now enjoying. The spiritual life means for us

the life as lived by the Spirit or God, and the question for us is why it is that one turns one's back on the life of the senses and entertains a desire to know God. In a general way, it can be said that the sensual life is found deficient and unsatisfactory for a thoughtful man, and so there is an instinctive yearning of the heart for a peaceful and happy life. To come to details, we shall find that there are various causes of this thirst for Divine life, various incidents and occasions due to one or other of which, man is thrown somehow by chance out of the vortex of sensuality into the penumbra of spiritual life, and according to his efforts is drawn more and more to the centre.

To begin with the more direct and effective causes on the emotional side, reaction against the hectic indulgence in pleasures of the body seems to be most prominent. There is a limit to the capacity of man to enjoy the bodily pleasures. The body and the senses become weak and exhausted; and though the desires increase in number and intensity, it becomes physically impossible to derive the satisfaction by fulfilling them. The more the indulgence, the sooner the reaction. When the body becomes impotent to yield the necessary pleasures, there arises disgust and contempt for it; and the vacant mind either takes to intellectual or spiritual pursuits.

Actual suffering from bodily pain due to old age or disease, loss of friends and relatives

and of persons who are most dear, calamities and perplexities of all sorts, and the consciousness of being utterly helpless to avert these, are again emotionally strong incentives for seeking the spiritual life.

Consciousness of having committed sins and the consequent repentance bring about, many a time, a sudden revolt against the past and an intense desire for a new way of living. Simultaneously, the repentant soul comes to believe in a redeemer who will wipe away the sins and guide him on to a new haven of peace, love and confidence.

Disappointments of various kinds in love, position, rank, honour and wealth in life, experience of deliberate wickedness and ingratitude of the world, desertion by friends and relatives without any cause, and the awareness of corresponding inequality when the weak, the effeminate and the unworthy are crowned with success in every way, are some of the causes which make a man fatalistic and pessimistic, in spite of himself. He comes to believe in a Fate or Power which is beyond himself. It is not the lucky successful few (deserving or underserving) but the unsuccessful and miserable, though deserving, many that have a right to be heard. If we consider also how persecution and misery are heaped upon the good and the righteous (e.g., Socrates, Jesus), the apparent injustice of the world will appear a riddle only to be solved by a faith

in another spiritual world which will set the balance right. The evil and injustice become, as it were, the price given in advance of the spiritual harvest to come. The cry of despair and disappointment, though uttered in the wilderness so far as the profits of this world are concerned, sometimes rouses the faith in the spiritual life, and so is not without any purpose.

Wounded pride and subdued vanity and arrogance may again be the turning points in a man's life. This is how Rameśvara Bhaṭṭa became a disciple of Tukārāma, and Vāmana-pandita was led to value the spiritual life. In such cases there is a peculiar combination of will and emotion; so that, when the will is frustrated the emotion too evaporates; and the soul becomes a passive receptacle of the new onrush of ideas, emotions or presentations that bring about the rupture. Tulasidāsa, who was excessively attached to his wife, is reported to have climbed up to her room by means of a snake which he mistook for a rope. But the admonitions, which he received from his wife, turned him into a devotee of God. Nāmadeva was moved by the sight of the misery of a widow whose husband he had killed. The emotion of mercy swept away his habit of waylaying travellers and placed in his heart a new object, viz., God. St. Paul left off persecuting the Christians and began to spread the gospel of Christ, because his zeal for persecution was

put an end to by the vision he saw on his road to Damascus. Hatred gave place to love, and persecution to protection. In all such cases, the zeal, the enthusiasm, and the will-power remain constant, though the emotion and the object of emotion change.

On the intellectual side, too, conversion is possible in the following way. For a thoughtful person, it is not quite necessary that he himself should undergo the emotional crisis, or be reduced to a plight of misery in order to react against it. It is enough if he has a real and sympathetic understanding of the nature of misery, injustice and evil. A thoughtful and sensitive person can do far more by his sweep of imagination and thought than a person with no imagination and little thought. The actual misery of the world is, as it were, visualized by him by his strong imaginative faculty; nay, being sensitive to the core, he lives and experiences it, as it were, though he may himself be rolling in riches. "*Sarvam Duḥkham Vivekinah*", says Buddha. The thought about the misery of others is itself as good as actual misery for a thoughtful person. That is why the sight of a corpse was to Goutama an epitome of all the misery and short-lived illusions of the world. The idea of the illusory and transitory nature of the world was so clear to Spinoza that he thought that God alone would be the object which would at once satisfy the intellect, the will and the heart. When Rāmadāsa, the



prince of rationalistic mystics, says that that person alone is fit for spiritual life who has been afflicted in all possible ways, what he means is, not that one must necessarily undergo all such afflictions, but must be pained by the idea of them, before he can hope to cross the threshold of life spiritual. The same moral is pointed out by the saying of Sankara that one should become a Sanyāsin the very day on which one becomes tired of the world. In short, a strong irresistible intellectual sympathy is as potent an urge for spiritual life as an emotional crisis or a physical pain, though it is true that actual suffering to a certain extent will sharpen that urge.

A chance but fortunate contact with the good and the holy is sometimes the cause of an altogether a new turn in life; and, if the personality be a powerful one, the liking created for the new way of living is very often permanent. The liking grows into faith, on account of the simple acts of goodness and piety done in imitation of the Master; and then it happens that the Master himself gradually puts the aspiring soul on the path of God.

A traditional mode of worship and of purification is yet another way which will ultimately lead one to apprehend the real way of knowing God. Let a man worship the image of God as his ancestors used to do, and let him bathe in the holy waters for self-purification and do other sorts of penances; the

faith that keeps him devout in doing Saguna-Bhakti, may, in course of time, enable him also to appraise Nirguna-Bhakti, which constitutes the essence of spiritual life. Let the devotion be Sakāma, done for the sake of some material end; one day, it will all of a sudden ripen into Nishkāma the end of which is the realization of God. Let the devotion be of an afflicted person, with the motive of getting over the afflictions and the miseries; there is the probability that, the miseries over, the devotion will be directed for the purpose of God-realization also. Let it again be of a person endowed with a rationalistic faith that inquires into the meaning and nature of divine life; it too will take the shape of a devotion characterised by intuition, meditation and surrender. For it is only by degrees and in course of time, that a man will realize the limitation of intellect and the futility of mere image-worship and godless penances, will come to possess less and less of desires, will learn to lessen his sorrows by the aid of God, develop indifference to physical sufferings and finally know God. In short, let a man begin anywhere to seek the spiritual life on account of some reason or other, even by doubting, hating or persecuting God and His followers, he is bound to come to the gates of spiritual life, provided his efforts are genuine.

So far, we have discussed the reasons which are responsible for bringing about a change main-

ly in the attitude of persons who are deeply merged in the life of the senses. A change in the attitude towards life is first necessary before it works out another change in the current of the life itself. There are thus two conversions before the spiritual life can be said to begin at all; the initial conversion which merely turns the face of the man from one sort of life to another, a mere change in the attitude; and the other, the real conversion which brings about a change in the man himself, and not simply in his attitude. The first is a change in the prospect lying ahead, in the view of the universe, in the mental equipment and the intellectual outlook; the second is the change in the actual mode of living and acting, in the moral and the spiritual being of man. We have only done with the causes that lead to the first change, the nature of which we will do well to describe briefly.

The transition from the state of Baddha (bound) to that of a Mumukshu (desiring liberation) constitutes the first conversion in the attitude or the view of life. A Baddha is he who has no knowledge of the Ātman, nor even a regard for it, or for those who have it. On the contrary, he has a definite disregard for the good and the holy, and takes a joy in speaking ill of them. Himself being sinful and voluptuous, and the storehouse of all that is ugly and wicked, in thought, speech and action, he cannot bear to have even a look at the

devotees of God. He censures them, wards off others from following them, and is so much engrossed in the sensual pleasures, that wealth and women are to him the highest prizes to be won in this life. Wealth and women become the sole objects of his contemplation, for the acquisition of which he spends every minute of his life and the concentrated force of the energies of his senses and body. He becomes so intoxicated by the fury of the passions that he becomes blind to the accumulating sins, and even to the facts that his body will be weak in old age and that he is to die. In a word, he does not pass beyond the consideration of his body, beyond the sensual, hedonistic scale of values.

In course of time, however, a reaction may take place in one or other of the many ways which we have considered above. There comes about a total revolution in the mental and intellectual make-up of the Baddha, and there emerges a new man (so far as the attitude to life is concerned) whom we shall now call Mumukshu. He is filled with horror at the recollection of the dark and nightmarish past, and almost despairs of the gloomy and uncertain future. He becomes ashamed of his hydra-headed egoism and his worldly greatness and reputation, which made him disbelieve in God and the saints. Reversing his steps, he comes to regard that which he had disregarded, owns his folly in not recognizing the evanescent nature of the worldly life, and remorsefully condemns

himself, as sinful, fallen, thoughtless and mean. Being scorched by the fire of repentance and self-condemnation, he feels a thirst for spiritual life and wishes to wait upon the good and the holy in order to have spiritual guidance.

## II

Before we proceed to the consideration of the other conversion which we style spiritual or metaphysical conversion, as distinguished from the one which we have just noticed, namely, the mental or moral conversion, we shall deal with two topics which appear interesting but distorted in the psychology of mysticism as dealt with by Western scholars. One is the problem of Pessimism as opposed to Optimism, and the other is that of the classification of conversion into types.

It is a constant practice of many Christian writers to dub Indian thought, as a whole, as pessimistic in outlook, thereby indicating that the Indian soul is very often sick and unhealthy. Space does not allow us fully to vindicate the honour of Indian thought as being perfectly healthy and free from sickness of any kind. It will be enough for our present purpose to point out the meaning and function of pessimism in the psychology of Indian mysticism and leave the prejudiced writers to take whatever moral they like.

If, by pessimism, we mean cowardice,

weakness, or a pusillanimous nature, pessimism then is a defect which must be ruthlessly eradicated. If, on the contrary, by pessimism we mean a correct philosophic appreciation of the fact of Evil and its supreme and inexorable hold on human destiny, and also if, by way of implication, we postulate the need of courage to face it and to overcome it, pessimism then is certainly a virtue which must be cultivated as a necessary prologue to any spiritual progress. Indian thought, though apparently pessimistic in outlook, is really robust and healthy. Hardly can a coward think of death as an impending calamity to be faced; hardly can he think of the joys and pleasures of life, the riches of kings and the most beautiful things of this world as things of nought, even though he has the capacity and ability to possess and enjoy them. It requires great courage, imagination and thought to face the dark aspect of life. Even a child can look with complacency on the sunny side of life. It requires neither courage nor imagination nor thought to say with the "happy-go-lucky" that they are "sanguine and healthy-minded." At best it is a statement of personal favourable circumstances, and not a philosophical opinion of what they actually are. When they refuse to take note of the dark side of life and are so circumstanced as to live habitually on the "sunny side of their misery line", as William James puts it, "how is it possible that they would ever rise

to the height of philosophic speculation and sound forth their opinions after a careful calculation of the two sides?" To quote again William James, "When such a conquering optimist as Goethe can express himself in this wise, what must it be with less successful men? 'I will say nothing against the course of my existence. But at bottom it has been nothing but pain and burden and I can affirm that during the whole of my 75 years, I have not had four weeks of genuine well-being.'"<sup>1</sup> Luther, again, one of the most successful men in the world, would readily eat up his necklace on account of absolute failure, as he declared his life to be. Tukārāma declares that in life happiness amounts to a barley seed, misery to a mountain. "Who is all-round happy in this world?" asks Rāmadāsa. Death accompanies the child even in its embryonic condition, says Jñāneśvara. Utterances like these are not at all indications of weakness, but of the recognition of the fact of Evil which must be heroically faced and lived.

The argument will gain in clearness, if we speak of optimism and pessimism, each on two levels. Pessimism on the lower level is a sign of weakness, and as such must be avoided. Optimism on the lower level is the superficial contentment with one's "brief chance at natural good." One must not be too proud of this; for one does not know when the "bell of

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<sup>1</sup> Varieties of Religious Experience, Ch. VI & VII.

life will have a crack.” Now, pessimism on the higher level—and Indian thought has the stamp of this higher pessimism—is always the index of extraordinary courage and imagination in visualizing the dark aspect of life. It implies the frank recognition of the fact that the chain of life is no stronger than its weakest link, and that life must be faced in all its stern and sad realities. The burden of life is accepted not grudgingly but heroically, and as the man gains in strength on account of the moral fervour and spiritual progress, there emerges the new optimism known to a mystic alone. The joy now felt is no longer the joy of “forgetful superficiality” of the so-called healthy-minded, or rather the healthy-bodied persons of the market or the forum. It is a joy of victory over the Evil and Fate. It is impossible for any to have this joy for whom there is no battle to be fought. The so-called optimists of the world are to be doubly pitied. In the first place, there is no problem for them to solve, or having one they ignore or forget it. In the second place, they are arrogant inasmuch as they dub those who have thought and imagination as pessimists. They do not understand that it is only on the background of the darkness of pessimism and asceticism that the moral and spiritual victory will shine forth with the richest hues of Divine joy and optimism.



## III

Another problem which deserves our attention before we pass on to spiritual conversion is the classification of conversion into types. William James and Starbuck classify cases of conversions according to two types: the volitional type and the type by self-surrender. "In the volitional type", says James, "the regenerative change is usually gradual and consists in the building up, piece by piece, of the new set of moral and spiritual habits." Self-surrender too seems indispensable according to Dr. Starbuck. "He must relax," says Dr. Starbuck, "that is, he must fall back upon a larger Power that makes for righteousness."<sup>1</sup> On a different basis, A. C. Underwood speaks of three types of conversion: the intellectual, the emotional and the moral. Conversion may also be sudden and gradual. In view of the various reasons due to which conversion takes place, we shall immediately find that there is one element of truth in all the varieties referred to by the psychologists. For a thoughtful man, conversion is bound to be volitional, gradual and intellectual. If a particular course of action is to be followed by him, it must first make an appeal to his intellect and then persuade the will. In the case of a person in whom there is a sudden rise and fall of emotions, conversion too will be sudden

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<sup>1</sup> Varieties of Religious Experience, Ch. X.

and very often of the type by self-surrender. It is the emotion which, being sudden, is strong to overpower its victim and make him surrender. The moral conversion, on the other hand, is either sudden or gradual, as also, voluntary or otherwise. It depends upon the character of the revolt against the immoral life in the past.

The view advocated by Dr. Starbuck that conversion is "a distinctively adolescent phenomenon" is however too facile a generalization to stand the test of empirical observation. We may grant that there is a "close connection between the ripening of the mental and physical powers at adolescence and religious awakening;" but this does not establish any causal connection between the two. The religious awakening may come at any period in a man's life, because the motives which cause such awakening are so widely different from each other, that it can hardly be said that they all crop up at adolescence only. How we wish that the religious awakening should occur at adolescence or even earlier, so that the religious activities will be pursued for a longer time and with greater energy!

The phenomenon of counter-conversion or of 'lapse,' though not of importance from the psychological point of view, is nevertheless admitted by James as a fact. We have to suggest that so far as the conversion in attitude towards life is concerned, there is the possibility

of a revision of view, and of a lapse, if the belief that is born is not powerful to induce action. There can, however, be no counter-conversion in the case of spiritual conversion which we shall presently discuss.

#### IV

Just as a stream, once it has become one with the river, cannot be separated; or just as iron cannot become iron when once it becomes gold at the touch of Parisa (Philosopher's stone), even so, an aspirant, once he is baptised into spiritual knowledge can never cease to be a spiritual unit. There may be lapses of conduct and indulgence into the old ways of living, and yet the spiritual link which has bound him to God can never be broken. He can never be non-spiritual in essence, though in practice and in theory he may do and speak in a manner unworthy of a spiritual being. That will constitute only a hindrance in the way of his spiritual progress, but will never turn out the seed of that immortal life which is sown deep in him. The spiritual conversion brings about the identity, in germ and in essence, of the Jīva and the Śiva, of self and God, and the whole spiritual life consists in the recognition and realization of this identity.

A peculiar feature of the spiritual conversion is that it requires another person to bring it about. It is well nigh impossible that one should

find the real path of God for himself without another person who has already realized God. The mental or the moral conversion may take place in an individual without any direct intervention of anybody else. No doubt, for spiritual progress, the intellectual, the mental, the moral and the devotional elements are all necessary but the bond of identity between man and God, which already exists for the purposes of theoretical metaphysics and from the Divine or Absolute point of view, must, for the purpose of practical spiritual life, and from the individual finite point of view, be forged from outside. The spiritual life is fundamentally and primarily a life of being and then of knowing; accordingly, man is first to become God or to approximate to Him and then (in the very moment of becoming) know that he is identical with God. Naturally, that which he is to become, he must have in him, to begin with, in the form of seed or germ; and the seed must be of such a concrete nature as will be amenable to growth. It is the concrete seed of the Idea or the Name of God, and not the abstract concept or class-name which does not grow. The scheme of abstract concepts will lead a man to formulate an arid metaphysics which he and others will intellectually understand. They will have merely an intellectual understanding of what is meant by God, but will never be able to become God or God-like.

The secret of knowing God, of realizing Him, is, whether we like it or not, in the hands

of Mystics. They must sow the seed of God in us if we wish to grow ourselves into the Divine tree; they must grant us the spark which will gradually be kindled into a huge spiritual fire. They must, to speak the truth, give us the Word or the Logos, the symbol of God, which will enable us to reach God. It is through them alone as spiritual teachers or Gurus, that we shall have to bring about the spiritual conversion in us. We shall first firmly establish in our mind the spiritual instruction or the Name of God, and then, in the fullness of time, be and know God simultaneously.

Another feature of the spiritual conversion is that it is not necessary that it should be preceded by the conversion in attitude; nor can it be said that spiritual conversion will follow as a necessary consequence of the moral one. God makes His own choice; and so does the spiritual teacher or Guru. For reasons which He alone may know best His grace may fall upon a sinful man; and it may take a longer time for a morally good person to have it. This does not mean that we should behave indifferently; it only means that there are no limitations on the power of God. The moment he is accepted as a man of God, "his sins will be washed away by the power of the Name of God." No separate and prior washing of sins is needed by way of repentance and moral conversion. And yet, from the human point of view, it remains true that repentance and

self-condemnation are valuable moral assets which make one expect the grace of God. Such a man will be doubly firm, firm by his own moral worth, and firm by the grace of God.

We shall close this chapter with a brief description of the function of the Guru in the spiritual life. So far as his salient characteristics are concerned, we shall deal with them in the chapter on the Ideal saint. The greatest function of the spiritual teacher is that it is he who alone can point out to the devotee the way of realizing God. Just as the mother feeds the baby directly on her milk, even so the Guru feeds the ears of the disciple with the spiritual instruction, and in that very moment, brings him in contact with God, and breaks off the fetters of bondage. The spiritual nourishment of the disciple being the only thing in his heart, the Guru leads the disciple Sādhana-ward, and holding him, as if by the hand, helps him to cross the ocean of Samsāra through obstacles and difficulties. He does not fondle the disciple and allow him to indulge in the sensual desires beyond a limit which he thinks fit; nor does he flatter him for any favours, even though the disciple is capable of giving away as a prize the kingdom of the whole earth. He only expects one thing from his disciples, and that is the service of God.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE PATH: MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL PREPARATION

### I

WITH initiation the threshold of spiritual life has been crossed ; man has become on probation a denizen of the new world. It is for him now to secure a permanent and respectable position among members of the new life, by a constant cultivation and display of the qualities necessary for that life. What those qualities are, and what training and discipline he must undergo in order to achieve his objective, we shall consider in this and in the next three chapters.

It can never be gainsaid that intellectual apprehension and moral worth are two of the most important qualifications of a Sādhaka, of one who is initiated in the way of knowing God. Whether they are equally important before the time of initiation is a matter of great doubt. If initiation, as observed in the last chapter, is ultimately the result of Divine grace, it may then very well happen that a

dull and an immoral person may be sanctified and received in the kingdom of God. But once he has been so received by an initial act of grace, the Sādhaka is expected to bid farewell to his foolish and sinful ways of living and to show by thought and actions that he deserved the grace. To continue to lead an immoral life even after initiation is, for all practical purposes, to undo the work of God. Even if the grace of God is competent to do all things, God will certainly expect some efforts on the part of his devotee, before He sends His grace unto him a second time. One act of Divine grace must be linked to another such act by human efforts, however imperfect they may be. Man too must toil in various ways and make himself more and more fit to receive on further occasions the grace from God. Thus, intellectual clarification and moral uprightness constitute the first stage of preparation on the path of God.

In the beginning, it may appear that intellectual preparation is possible only to a few, though the moral one is possible for all. In course of time, however, it will be found that, as a direct result of the spiritual life, intellect too is sharpened, that what was not grasped by the intellect formerly is being grasped, and that intellect combined with faith and experience is capable of keeping a man firm in his religious and moral life. On the one hand, intellect and good will are the means that strengthen the spiritual life; on the other,



they are themselves strengthened and turned to good account by spiritual life. So, for all the genuine Sādhakas, intellect and good will are the two constant companions that make the journey of the Spirit safe and easy. At no time and stage of the journey can they be dispensed with, just as, at no time of our physical existence, can we do away with the utility of our physical eyes.

To begin with the intellectual aids: Sāstra-prachiti, that is, the intellectual understanding of what is contained in the scriptures, and the Guru-prachiti, that is, the understanding of the truths as known by the Guru, are a preliminary to what is known as Ātma-prachiti, that is, Self-experience or Self-realization. Our own experience of a thing is the highest authority we can have about the truth of that thing; and yet, the authority is vitiated to a certain extent by the element of illusions in our experience. To guard against the possibility of our experience as a whole being nothing but a series of illusions, we are constrained to take into consideration the experiences of the saints and others who are spiritually advanced. As the Naiyāyika allows it, Āptavākya comes next to Self-experience in point of authority. And when the various Āptavākyas are collected together, they form what is known as a genuine Sāstra regarding a particular branch of study. Reversing the order, we may say that the best course (for a

novice) is to begin with the Śāstras or the philosophical discussions regarding spiritual matters. He will thereby have the necessary intellectual grounding; but when there arise different opinions, he should fall back upon the second source of authority, namely, the opinions of the experts whom he may be knowing. And yet, what is the use of this knowledge, whether it is derived from books or persons, unless it is tested by actual self-experience? No doubt, it is useful in the way in which theory is useful for practice; but it is the practice of self-experience which is most important as an end-in-itself.

The reading of spiritual literature is the greatest incentive even for those who are not spiritually-minded; no wonder, it will be a definite aid to those who are already on the path. Rāmadāsa tells us that a person whose mind is fickle should not leave the reading of his Dāsabodha; much less, by a person who has formed contact with the spiritual life. For it is by constant and daily reading that the meaning which is hidden will gradually manifest itself, and the spiritual life will take deep roots in the soul.

The reading of spiritual literature has a double function. It serves the purposes of philosophy and devotion. Like philosophy, it enables us to discriminate between truth and falsehood, and between the real and the unreal; but unlike philosophy, it enables us to have not

merely the construction of the intellect alone, but of intellect and intuition combined. What is first experienced intuitively is put afterwards in the familiar concepts of intellect. The spiritual literature contains first-hand, direct experience couched in terms of reason, so that, even a student of mere philosophy may in imagination understand, though vaguely, the experience contained in it. To one who is initiated, the spiritual literature comes both as a tonic to the brain and sauce to the heart. If he reads about things of which he has previously an experience, he is delighted to find that he is on the right path and is convinced about the accuracy of statements which he reads; and if he reads about things of which he has had no experience, he expects no doubt similar accuracy of statement, but regrets that he has no experience corresponding to what he reads. It is this conviction about the accuracy of statement and the ardent longing of the heart to have a corresponding experience that is most valuable from the point of view of spiritual progress. It is not a small gain to be philosophically convinced about the truths of mystical religion, and to possess an insatiable desire to have an actual experience of these truths. The reading of spiritual literature achieves this. It makes a man satisfied and not satisfied at the same time; satisfied so far as he is intellectually and intuitively convinced, and not satisfied so far as there is

the intellectual understanding but no actual experience. In the case of a student of mere philosophy, there may not be any dissatisfaction or feeling of want; but in a Sādhaka, the spiritual literature creates the desire to have more and more of experience, and brings home to his mind the sense of weakness, finitude and helplessness. As such, the reading of spiritual literature awakens the Sādhaka to the need of making more efforts, of cultivating the moral virtues and of enhancing his meditations and devotion.

Let us illustrate this by reference to two or three sayings of the saints. When Tukārāma says that a man would very often be ashamed in his heart when he declares openly that another man's wife is to him as good as his own mother, Tukārāma voices forth loudly what passes in the minds of us all. When in Jñāneśvara we read that the Chakora bird will refuse to eat grains of sand when he is so fortunate as to have a feast of moon-beams, or that one who has tasted nectar will refuse to partake of the fluid made of parched rice, we become immediately aware of the world-wide difference between a saint enjoying the spiritual bliss and a man of the world indulging in the pleasures of the senses. When again in Rāmādāsa we read of some sure tests of spiritual life, such as the sense of being without sins, of having put a stop to the round of births and deaths, and of having realized the identity of

devotee and God, we feel with utmost humility that with all our spiritual efforts we have achieved nothing. So the reading of spiritual literature does not give us merely soothing doses of theoretical knowledge, but stirs our emotions and makes us fully alive to the currents of devotion in it. It makes us restless and humble, and consequently, more devotional and more dependent on the mercy of God.

The reading of spiritual literature and the discussion of spiritual matters constitute, in a way, *Saguna-Bhakti* as well. There is no room for discussion or for mental and vocal discourse in *Nirguna-Bhakti*. So if there is any sort of devotion which allows this, it is *Saguna*. A constant reading of the attributes of God, of the qualities of a saint, of the nature of meditation and its effects and various other kindred topics, brings the mind from the abyss of sensuality to the plane of the Spirit and prepares it to assimilate the spiritual manna given to it by the Guru at the time of initiation. The reading of spiritual literature thus enables the mind to make the transition from the *Saguna* to the *Nirguna* type of devotion by the means of *Śravaṇa* and *Manana*. Whether you read a passage or have a discussion over it, or whether you are engaged in meditation on the Word or the Name of God, it is with necessity that you involve *Śravaṇa* and *Manana*. To those very few who are able constantly to meditate on the Name of God, or in other words,

practise Nirguṇa-Bhakti without the aid of Saṅḡa, reading of spiritual literature may not be required often. But to those—and they form the majority—who are fickle-minded and cannot meditate even for a short time on the symbol of God, Saṅḡa-Bhakti, as practised by way of reading and discussions of spiritual matters, will be of immense value. In course of time, the mind will bid farewell to idleness, ignorance and unbelief. There will arise the desire for reading the passages from spiritual literature again and over again, just as there arises the desire to have more and more of the pleasures we have tasted. The mind will work upon the suggestions received through the literature regarding the nature and qualities of God, and so will be tempted to linger upon the symbol of God. It will then use the same contrivance of meditating on the Name of God, which it uses in reading and discussing the attributes of God. The mind which is accustomed to the hearing and the contemplation of the attributes of God, will, in the same way, be accustomed to the hearing and the meditation of the Name of God. It is thus that the reading of spiritual literature, as constituting Saṅḡa-Bhakti, will lead the Sādhaka to the practice of Nirguṇa-Bhakti as well.

## II

There are, however, three great dangers to which the intellectual preparation is exposed, and from which a Sādhaka must take the utmost care to save himself. One is that the Sādhaka may become so absorbed in Saguna-Bhakti, and may take to it so excessively, that he may either deliberately refuse to take to Nirguna-Bhakti, thinking that Saguna Bhakti is all in all and that Nirguna Bhakti is nothing ; or being attracted by the verbal and pictorial imagery he may find it impossible to get out of it. Such a man will wander from place to place in search of God, but not being able to see the immaculate form of God and not being able to know that the highest prayer and praise of God is to utter His Name, will worship the images of God, read all sorts of books, repeat verbal prayers, and do all sorts of penances and activities without having an iota of the silent enjoyment of God. If, unfortunately, imagination should help such a man, the anthropomorphic picture of God will be complete ; and further, on account of priestcraft and folly, God may be degraded even to the extent of a being who indulges in the pleasures of the senses.

Another evil which must be strenuously guarded against, is the wilful belief in the greatest truth 'I am the Brahman.' No amount of intellectualism and imagination will

be able to create this experience of the identity between the 'I' and the 'Brahman,' Merely to suppose and to continue to suppose that "I am the Brahman," is the greatest pitfall in the spiritual life. No doubt, '*Aham Brahmāsmi*' is the cardinal tenet of the Vedānta and of the spiritual life. But the identity is to be only gradually and approximately reached as the result of a long process of moral and spiritual progress, aided by the grace of God. It is not a make-belief which hypothetically promises salvation, by hardening it further into a sort of hallucination, by the process of unmeaning repetition of the phrase, '*Aham Brahmāsmi*.' It is a life of identity, of oneness, which must be lived without the arrogance of the consciousness of the separate existence of the 'I.' The 'I am the Brahman' paradoxically involves the annihilation of the 'I' or the ego. If the Brahman is everywhere, and there is nothing else, then surely where is the room for the existence of the 'I' as a separate something? The 'I am the Brahman' implies the consciousness of the 'I' as the subject of a logical proposition of which its identifications with the Brahman is the predicate. In the language of pure intellectualism, or formal logic, both are first thought of as separate, the 'I' and the 'Brahman', and then, later, an identification is formulated by means of the logical proposition. There is an experience of the



consciousness of the 'I', but there being no experience of the Brahman, its existence becomes for the mere Vedāntin a postulate or an assumption, and the pity of it is that with the empirical consciousness of the 'I' and the theoretical awareness of the metaphysical existence of the Brahman, the Vedāntin ventures to imitate the Saint by declaring the identity of the 'I' and the 'Brahman.' The saint, on the other hand, first experiences the Brahman as the 'that,' and then looking into himself, he finds that there too there is nothing else but Brahman. It is on the basis of this double experience that the saint can truly declare the self-same proposition of the Vedāntin '*I am the Brahman.*' Who is this robber of an 'I,' when there is nothing else but God? asks Rāmādāsa. *Tat-tvam-asi*, 'if rightly interpreted from the viewpoint of spiritual experience, involves first the experience of the Brahman as the 'that,' or *tat* and secondly the experience of the Brahman as identical with the 'tvam,' or the subject who has the experience. So the expression '*Aham Brahmāsmi*' is nothing but a paraphrase of the expression '*Tat-tvam-asi*,' in both of which experience of the Brahman is followed by that of the omnipresence of the Brahman, whether in the 'I' or any other thing of the world. Śaṅkara echoes the same truth from the spiritual point of view when he says, '*Ādou Brahmāhamas-*

*mītyanubhava udite khalvidam Brahma paśchāt.*' The identity of the Brahman with the world (*idam*) is posited in the same manner as the identity of the Brahman with the I (*aham*). In short, in the Brahmanic experience of the saints and philosopher-saints, there is the experience of a unitive life, and not the dualistic combination of an experience and an inference known to an intellectualist and a mere philosopher.

A third danger of intellectualism to which we may briefly refer is that the excess of it may land us in scepticism and nihilism. The intellect, instead of being a good instrument for the cause of spiritual life, acts like a purge which removes itself as well as the disease. A thorough-going scepticism of the Humian type has, as a matter of fact, no philosophy of its own. It is the denial of all knowledge and of itself too. We have only to remember the admission of Hume in this connection, as to how his sceptical philosophy had reacted on his life. He played at tennis, he played at back-gammon, but when he returned home, he found himself gloomy and miserable. If then scepticism makes philosophy impossible and life miserable, it is better to bid it good-bye as early as possible.

## III

We now pass on to the moral preparation of the spiritual life. The question of the relation of morality and religion deserves our attention at this stage. We have already remarked that even a sinner may, for no obvious reason, be the recipient of the grace of God and be introduced to the life of the Spirit. This may arouse the suspicion that the life of morality is of little consequence to the life of the Spirit, but as also remarked above, a sinner who has once received the grace of God must show by his behaviour that he deserves it a second time. Professor Ranade remarks that a man without moral life is a "hideous" spectacle and a "blot"<sup>1</sup> on the spiritual life. Such a person invites ridicule not only upon himself, but upon the spiritual society to which he belongs and upon the spiritual life itself. Rightly he will be called by the people one who, 'while in penance, is planning sins anew.' His spiritual activities will rightly be considered as a garb to hide his sins. The merit which he will accumulate by means of spiritual exercises will be exhausted in committing various kinds of sins and frauds. He will be on a slippery path, now appearing to make some progress, but, all of a sudden, plunging back into the old ways of living. In short, the spiritual life, if at all possible, without morality, will merely

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<sup>1</sup> Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy, p. 288.

be a stunted growth. †

The moral life, on the other hand, though possible without the spiritual, is like a store of gunpowder which will never explode for want of a spark, or like a pregnant woman who can never deliver. It is contended however that the moral virtues have all their meaning due to social life. Truth and goodness, for example, owe all the significance they have to the "social service" which they make possible. Such an apostle of Truth and Non-violence as Mahātmā Gandhi, who would willingly define his religion as "Truth is God" says that for the "realisation of truth....there is no escape from social service."<sup>1</sup> This identification of morality with religion tacitly assumes that society is all in all and that God (if there be any) is nothing apart from the society. Once more, like Comte and his followers, apostles of social service, have dethroned God and deified man. The moral virtues such as truth and non-violence have all the divine significance on account of the service which is possible of man. The metaphorically eternal life of man and society is considered as the only matrix out of which the moral or the divine conceptions of truth and goodness have sprung up and developed. This means that whatever objective values you wish to attach to the moral qualities, are due to the eternal society of man.

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p. 21.

We cannot go into a thorough examination of this view for want of space. Suffice it to say that the service of man is not the only motive for being truthful or good. If truth is God, and if it is to be achieved gradually through "social service," then it appears that for a Robinson Crusoe or a cave-man, there would be no social service, and as such, no realization of truth and of God. To say that the society affords the field or the scope for the manifestation and cultivation of a moral virtue is one thing; and to say that the whole content and the objective validity of that virtue is entirely due to the relations between man and man is another thing. Truth, Beauty and Goodness, as pointed out very ably by Sorley, in his Gifford lectures, have objective value, not because they point out merely the man for whom they are useful, but because they are ultimately rooted in God, who is, as all spiritual idealists claim, at once True, Good and Beautiful. The sweetness of the mango resides in the mango, though somebody is required to declare that it is sweet. Even so, a being (whether man or God) is intrinsically true or good, though the goodness or truth is found useful to society. If the moral qualities are not simply, in the Humian fashion, to flutter in the air, or are not to be resolved into relations (social service) without taking into consideration the terms to be related, then, they must primarily belong to someone, and be found in him as forming the

very texture of his nature, and then, secondarily be of use to him in his relations to others, inasmuch as he is intimately bound together with other social and moral beings.

Social service (to proceed with the apparent but necessary digression) is only an occasion on which the moral insight gains strength and keenness by actual practice. It is a poor pragmatic justification of moral worth to say that it 'works' or that it makes the life of us all agreeable or comfortable. As a matter of fact, the moral worth of a man may be misunderstood, and in a society of fools and knaves may be the cause of distress to all. On the other hand, a man of no moral worth may, in some way, be of incalculable service to the society. And yet the truth remains that whether any moral excellence is useful or not to the society at large, sufficient it is if it is appreciated and supported by those few in the society who have themselves got the excellence in them. So, to the question why should I be moral? the proper answer is, not that I thereby become useful to the society, but that I have a definite objective value attached to morality, on account of its being ingrained also in other persons who set a high value on it. I must be moral, because the saints who have seen God, have lived a moral life. I must be moral not simply because there is the legal or the social sanction, but the spiritual sanction of the saints. They will be pleased to find that I lead a moral

life; and, further, God too will be pleased, for He sums up within Him and is the support of all moral values.

The moral life is therefore doubly valuable; valuable as a positive asset for the well-being of the society, and valuable as the backbone and the pointer of the spiritual life. And yet we must remember that short of the spiritual life, the mere moral life, though covetable by itself, is poor all the same. Though grand in social edifice, it has neither an abiding foundation nor an end which will be considered as an end-in-itself. A moral house built on the foundation of Divine sanction is worthy of being occupied, though it may seem to afford room for only a few members of the society. The end of such a moral code is to facilitate the realization of God, which will then be found to be compatible with any amount of social service.

A spiritual aspirant will therefore do well to imitate the saint and first of all realize God and then distribute the fruit of his realization for the good of all. The behaviour of the mystic is natural with him alone; yet it becomes, as it were, the norm or standard of behaviour for the ordinary man. The moral qualities of a Siddha are the natural results of God-realization; it is impossible that they should be also the marks of a Sādhaka. But let him assume the virtues if he has not got them; for in course of time, by practice and

by imitation, and by meditation and devotion, they will be found in him too. The way down of the Siddha will be the way up of the Sādhaka. In the two chapters regarding the 'Criteria of God-realization' and characteristics of 'an Ideal Saint,' we shall see how the several qualities of the saint are nothing but properties that flow naturally from the high quality of God-realization. Naturally, the description of the moral preparation of a Sādhaka is nothing but a corollary drawn from observation of the life of a Siddha. In this chapter, we shall deal with some of the moral qualities which will, on account of imitation of the saint, make our path to God smooth and safe.

Implicit faith in the Guru is perhaps the greatest of the moral virtues. To consider the Guru as equal to God and never to consider him as equal to the flesh in man, is the first and the last requirement of a spiritual aspirant. At the outset it may be only blind credulity to believe that the Guru is God, but with meditation and experience, the disciple gains insight, and the blind credulity is gradually transformed into a rational faith.

As the result of this growing rational faith in the Guru, the whole of the spiritual life of the disciple revolves round two things. One is the purity of life, and the other, the meditation on God. A complete account of meditation will appear in the two chapters on Devotion. So far as the purity of life is concerned, it is



either external or internal. The external purity is attained by doing various acts, such as washing one's body, under-going penances, and regularity and method in diet and exercise. The internal, which matters most, arises on account of knowledge and good actions; and this becomes possible only when evil and sinful thoughts are purged out by the constant contemplation of good and righteous ones. Perfect internal purity will arise only when the mind becomes completely rid of desires, avarice and anger, which according to the Bhagavad-gītā are the three doors that open into hell. But it is impossible that the qualities of desirelessness and angerlessness will be first established, without the realization of God, who alone is without any desire or anger. And yet, to a certain extent, there must be an effort on the part of the aspirant to cultivate these great moral qualities.

A very practicable method has been suggested by the saints, by way of compromise, between a life full of desires and a life without them, namely, to have only such desires as will not make the spiritual life impossible. It is a paradox of spiritual life that it is not possible without annihilation of desires, and that desirelessness is not possible without spiritual life. Psychologically, it is a riddle which appears hard to solve. A desire, if satisfied, produces another of its kind; and if killed or suppressed, it is born again in a new and violent

form. The saints have very remarkably succeeded in solving the riddle, by pointing out the compatibility of the two lives, the worldly and the spiritual, though strictly speaking, the two are just the opposites of each other. The great emotional urges in life cannot simply be eradicated; life will be torn thereby. Neither can they be allowed to have their full sway; life will be crushed under its own weight. The saints have given us perhaps the greatest moral guidance in allowing us, on the one hand, to satisfy the natural appetites of the body and the mind, and thus make the spiritual life possible, and, on the other hand, urging on us the necessity of so enhancing the spiritual life in intensity and duration, that the tempest of the sensual life will gradually calm down into peace.

It is enough from the moral point of view if the Sādhaka makes a vow to observe two things very rigorously. One is, not to cast a sinful eye on a woman, and the other, not to covet another man's wealth. This leaves ample scope for satisfaction of the sexual instinct as well as for honest toil and labour for one's own bread. On the one hand, there is the moderate satisfaction of natural desires; on the other, the exuberance of the passions is downright suppressed and burnt ruthlessly by the fire of meditation and thought. The Sādhaka will have his conscience very clear, and will go in for meditation almost with

a clean state of mind. If, instead of making the vow unto himself, he makes it in public or before his Guru, then, the fear of breaking it will be an additional motive which will keep him moderate. As a matter of fact, if a man only remains on his guard regarding the two evils due to woman and wealth and resorts to meditation daily and without any holidays, the spiritual progress is bound to be there. God is not cruel or a miser to withhold His grace from such a person. Of course, there are a number of other moral virtues, which, if cultivated, will facilitate the spiritual progress.

The Sādhaka should, once for all, bid farewell to idleness, sleep and the sense of shame which one may feel in sending his prayers to God. The span of life being limited and uncertain in its length, the Sādhaka should consider that it is his greatest treasure, and, as such, must be turned to good account. If idleness or sleep or other considerations were to destroy a major portion of our life-time, then spiritually considered, we are the greatest losers. Therefore one must make haste to realize God. One does not know when one is to die, and what will be the condition of his body in old-age. The Sādhaka should therefore constantly think in advance of death and old-age, and should take to meditation only when they are far away. A pessimistic outlook on life, and the fear of old-age and death act as great spurs in the spiritual life.

Love of solitude and a dislike for crowds are very essential conditions without which there will be no substantial spiritual progress. To meet God in crowds is possible only after one has met Him in solitude, and not *vice versa*. Deliberately, therefore, one must cultivate the habit of sitting for meditation in solitary places, and in places where bodies are being cremated. This will serve the purpose of urgently bringing home the truth as given to us by Rāmadāsa that the “only profit in the mortal fair is (to realize) God.”<sup>1</sup>

To keep oneself in the company of the good and the holy, and to avoid the company of the evil and the wicked are again absolutely necessary for maintaining and enhancing the life of devotion and surrender. It must be always remembered with gratitude and love that it is the saint and none else who has shown the Sādhaka the path of God. Naturally, nothing which is spiritually important will ever remain hidden and uncommunicable in an assembly of saints. The Sādhaka must therefore make it his life-task to seek the company of the saints with humility and reverence, and destroy his egoism, disbelief and doubts; that he should avoid the company of the unbelievers, the wicked and the uxorious follows as a corollary.

Truthfulness, at least with reference to God and the Guru, extraordinary courage not to stop at anything but the experience of God,

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Mahārāshtra, p. 387. •

patience to suffer any amount of hardships and calamities, to turn a deaf ear to the praises of oneself, being equanimous and tranquil in spite of the dualities, exhibiting the tender emotions of compassion and pity for the distress of others, and, above all, the remembering of the Name of God at all times are, as Jñāneśvara says, the “flowers in the garland that adorns the neck of the Dispassionate.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Mahārāshtra, p. 91.

## CHAPTER V

# THE PATH: PĀTAÑJALA-YOGA AND BHAKTI

### I

We have now come to the mid-current of the spiritual life. The sādḥaka has left behind him the conditions of the bound and the mere aspirant, and has thrown himself in the spiritual stream. He has grown confident on account of the newly acquired strength of his two arms, Viveka and Vairāgya. Yet he is no tough swimmer and cannot boast of having over-ridden completely and finally the evils and temptations which cross and recross the life of the Spirit. For this, it will be better if he makes himself fit both mentally and physically, and then carries on the struggle further by the aid of devotion and meditation. Yogin as he is and intends to be of the Devotional type, he will be immensely benefited if he trains himself under the discipline of the Pātañjala-Yoga.

The Pātañjala-Yoga claims to be a way of liberation and bliss. It will be the height

of presumption to say that it is not. But in view of the various points of difference between it and the Yoga of Devotion, and in view of certain peculiar characteristics of the latter which are absent from the former, we are tempted to say with the author of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad and with that of the Bhagavadgītā that the only way to know and to reach God is through an exclusive, faithful and unceasing devotion to God. If it be said that the Pātañjala-Yoga too speaks of God and of devotion to God, we have to say that it makes such reference in one of its Sūtras by employing the particle 'Vā', definitely suggesting thereby that devotion to God is a co-ordinate means of attaining Samādhi (Pā. I-23). On two more occasions there is a reference to the devotion to God as a sub-variety of one of the eight Aṅgas of Yoga (Pā. II-1, 32). So the Pātañjala-Yoga-Darśana is not itself clear whether Bhakti-Yoga is subordinate to or co-ordinate with the Yoga of Patañjali. Ignoring this defect of inconsistency, and taking for granted that Bhakti-Yoga is treated as if on a par with the Pātañjala-Yoga, we have to raise the question whether a devotionless Yoga can lead us to liberation and to God. The mere Yogin without the love of God will often turn into a stoic, and feel that he is liberated; the devotee too will feel that he is liberated, but liberated on account of the grace of God; and though capable of presenting the sterner quali-

ties of the mind, he will necessarily be full of compassion for others.

What we wish to bring out in this chapter is that a combination of the two Yogas is desirable from the point of view of spiritual progress. The body, the mind and the spirit live together ; naturally, if the fitness of the body and of the mind helps the spirit to have its ascent, it is all the more desirable. There will be very little spiritual progress, if the energies of the spirit are spent in overcoming the disabilities of the body and the temptations of the mind ; but if, by the practice of Yoga, the body and the mind are disciplined, it is an invaluable help for a sādḥaka to concentrate all his energies on his sole objective of realizing God by means of devotion. • If the question is to be categorically and simply stated, devotion, by itself, is sufficient and is the only means to realize God ; but if there are other means to facilitate the way of devotion, so much the better for it. The Yoga of Patañjali (excluding that portion from it which deals with God and devotion to Him, as borrowed from a co-ordinate system) becomes therefore a highly serviceable adjunct to the Yoga of devotion.

The Pātañjala-Yoga has its brilliant and notable characteristics, which we shall first briefly note. • We shall then enumerate a number of points in which it differs from Bhakti-Yoga, and then finally, make the transition to the latter.



1. It claims the highest mystical experience as the end of the science. Experience of the self by the self is definitely referred to twice in the Sūtras (Pā. I-3 ; IV-34). It is known as 'Kaivalya' or 'Chit-Sakti.'

2. Abhyāsa and Vairāgya, that is, practice and non-attachment are the two great means, whereby the end is achieved. These two means are referred to also in the Bhagavadgītā (VI-35), and so, the yoga is to be continued for a long time, always, and with the attitude of regard. This reveals that the author of the Sūtras has a great psychological insight. He understands that to practice a thing for long and without break is possible only when there is regard for that thing, and that virtue consists in the practice of that virtue (Pā. I-12, 14).

3. Pranava or the syllable 'Om' is the symbol of God ; and devotion consists in the meditation on this symbol. As a result of this meditation, the Ātman is realized, and then, all evils, diseases and difficulties vanish. (Pā. I-23, 27-29).

4. The way to purify the mind is to get oneself befriended by the happy, to show compassion to the afflicted, to be delighted at the sight of the meritorious, and to ignore the sinful (Pā. I-33).

5. When the moral qualities are firmly established in a man the results are wonderful, *e.g.*, when non-killing is established,—even natural enemies who are near such a man give

up their enmity of their own accord ; when truth,—anything is obtained without sacrifices ; when non-stealing,—acquisition of all jewels ; when celibacy,—acquiring extraordinary power ; when purity,—there arises contempt for one's own body and for the bodies of others, mind becomes joyful and steady, the senses are curbed, and the man becomes fit for the realization of the Ātman ; when contentment,—incomparable bliss ; when the meditation on Mantras,—the seeing and speaking with the gods ; and when the devotion of God,—Samādhi is accomplished (Pā. II-35-45).

6. Good posture is that which is steady and comfortable. Prāṇāyāma, *i.e.*, the control of breath, combined with posture, makes concentration easy, and enables one to get control over the senses ; the senses withdraw themselves from their objects, and Buddhi becomes clear and penetrating (Pā. II-35-55).

7. Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi are the three stages of one and the same process of concentration on an object. In the first, there is the concentration of attention ; in the second, there is the identity of the subject and the object, and yet there is the consciousness of the feeling of identical life ; in the third, the unitive life is simply lived without the separate feeling of "I am living this unitive life." Samādhi is also spoken of as Saṁprajñāta and Asaṁprajñāta, or Sabīja and Nirbīja, or again, as Savikalpa and Nirvikalpa (Pā. III 1-3, 7 & 8).

Professor M. Hiriyanna seems to have taken the two forms of Samādhi as differing in kind. "The lower Samādhi is quite intelligible psychologically; but the higher, because it presupposes the suppression of the mind, takes us beyond normal psychical life. We pass in it to the realm of mysticism."<sup>1</sup> The two Samādhis appear to us as only differing in degree; the second is only the later stage of the first. So long as there is the consciousness of bliss, of 'Isness', of the subject-object relation as indicated by the feeling, "I am the Experiencer," there is the Savikalpa Samādhi; Nirvikalpa is just the next stage, which is to be only experienced silently, and of which no language can give any description.

8. The Yogin acquires supernatural powers on account of Saṁyama (Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi put together, Pā. III-4) on various objects; *e.g.*, he can know the past and the future, can interpret the language of any creature, and know the past births of any persons. When Saṁyama is on the mind of another person, he can know what is passing in his mind, in a general way. The yogin becomes invisible, foretells the time and place of his death, acquires the strength of elephants etc., knows everything in all the worlds including the movements of the planets and the stars, the anatomy of his body etc.; becomes free from hunger and thirst, has visions of saints

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<sup>1</sup> Outlines of Indian philosophy, p. 297.

and Siddhas ; realizes the self, and, as a result of this, has a knowledge of supernatural sounds, touches, visions, tastes and smells, even when he comes out of his Samādhi in the wakeful ordinary life. He gets entrance anywhere without hindrance and comes out in like manner, in and from, water, mud, thorns etc. ; looks like fire and flies in air ; gets control over the five elements and senses ; enslaves the entire universe ; acquires liberation by burning desires in the fire of Vairāgya and by purification of the Buddhi (Pā. III, 17-55).

9. The Yogin has to meet with innumerable obstacles in his way. Beautiful women from heaven try to allure him by offering all sorts of pleasures of the senses (Pā. III, 51).

10. Desires are difficult to conquer ; but one who sees that the Ātman or the Puruṣha is never contaminated by the contact of Buddhi, which however becomes sullied by the Guṇas and the desires, will be able to achieve final liberation or Moksha. If the Buddhi is trained not to become contaminated, then, gradually, the Guṇas die their own death ; desires are burnt in their seeds and the Buddhi gets a clear image of the Puruṣha (Pā. III, 55).

## II

Though there is much to be recommended in the above as being worthy to be achieved for moral and spiritual progress, and though

there is much to be coveted in the supernatural powers as adding to the glory and success of human life as a whole, the Pātañjala-Yoga appears to fall short of the aims and ideals of Bhakti-Yoga. The ideal of self-realization, the means of Abhyāsa and Vairāgya as also other means of posture and Prāṇāyāma, the meditation on the Praṇava, the purification of the mind and the control of the senses are some of the prominent features which deserve the highest recommendation. But there are others, such as the acquisition of supernatural powers which, though desirable in their own way, are not necessary from the point of view of God-realization. We shall, therefore, now point out how in some respects the two Yogas differ fundamentally from each other.

1. The Yoga-Sūtras contain a reference, no doubt, to the experience of self-realization and though, truly speaking, as mentioned also in the Bhagavadgītā, there remains nothing to be done by one who sports with the Ātman and who is satisfied with the Ātmanic life (B.G. II-17), the devotee of God, as Tukārāma tells us, remains in the world after God-realization for the simple reason of doing good to the world. A life of disinterested service for the only purpose of turning people towards God is advocated by almost all Indian saints, even after God has been realized. That is why the question of how a saint behaves in the world after he has realized God has become a topic of great and

absorbing interest with all the writers of devotional mysticism. "We are the residents of Vaikunṭha" declares Tukārāma; "but we have come here to worship the saints, and save people that have gone astray." This note of merciful redemption as if it is the work of God, and the necessity of living, therefore, a morally disinterested life even after God-realization are absent from the Yoga.

2. The Samādhi of devotion is compatible with action; it is doubtful whether it is so with the Samādhi of Yoga; for the Yoga-ideal appears to increase the duration of Samādhi which may last for days together continuously.

3. God, the object of devotion, is capable of being realized in all the conditions of life, the waking, the sleeping and the dreaming; the object of Yogic Samādhi—and it may be anything—whether Savikalpa or Nirvikalpa, is achieved during Samādhi only. When the Yogin comes out of the state of Samādhi the objects of his Samādhi may vanish, and there may rush in other objects on his consciousness, which were held over for the time being. For the true devotee, on the other hand, God being the only focal object of his consciousness at all times, other objects remain in his marginal consciousness.

4. The Samādhi of Yoga is induced deliberately by the Yogin and with effort; while that of devotion is being partly induced by the attractive nature of the mystical object

and partly by meditation on the Name of God. It is therefore comparatively effortless and natural, and is known as Sahāja-Samādhi. Yoga appears to be the journey of a single person; Devotion requires two, the devotee and the God or the Guru. That is why, such phenomena as repentance, confession and conversion, prayer and grace, the dark nights of the soul and our redemption from them, the initiation into spiritual life by the Guru, service of the Guru as to God, are all absent from the Yoga.

5. Such phenomena, again, as tears of joy, reverence, awe, fear at the sight of the mystical object, and the ecstasies, the raptures and the dancings which show a tumultuous enjoyment of God are all unknown to Yoga. The Yogin has to retire into his closet and shut up the windows of his senses before he can expect to go into a trance. The devotee too does so in the earlier stages, but in the later stages, he need not necessarily run away from society. He enjoys the highest possible joy even in the midst of great crowds; he enjoys solitude where there is none. "There arises the ecstatic joy" says Rāmadāsa, "when without shame of the people and without entertaining any doubt, the Kirtana is performed." God being the only object of attention, the entire surroundings are forgotten.

6. Kumbhaka occupies a prominent place in the exercise of Prāṇāyāma. It is of two kinds, one internal and the other external.

The internal consists of the duration in which the inhaled wind is controlled and not allowed to go out; and the external consists of the duration in which the wind is not allowed to enter, after it has been exhaled. Now this suspension of breath positive and negative which is performed twice deliberately, mechanically and mathematically for the physiological and mental purposes of purifying the body and the mind in the Yogic system, occurs naturally and without any effort on account of the emotions that enter into the life of devotion. It is a common psychological fact that when the mind is under a sudden emotional stress, there occurs as a reaction, the suspension of breath. Fear, for example, creates the instinctive desire to protect oneself from the object of fear. The animal trying to hide itself from its enemy which is very close, or a man trying to hear a low and indistinct sound coming from afar, inevitably suspends the breath for a while. It is not by an act of will that the saint suspends his breath; it is on account of the ecstatic joy which he feels at the sight, sound, touch or smell of the mystical object, the ardent longing that the spiritual experience should grow in intensity, volume and duration, and the curious mingling of the various emotions in his heart, that the breathing itself automatically stops for a while. The saint enjoys the state of Sahaja Kumbhaka, but it is not a state of vacant stillness; it is full of God



and of emotions arising out of a life in God.

7. The visions, the sounds, the smells etc., which are mentioned in the Yoga, are mere sign-posts which cause impediment in the state of Samādhi, but which are the source of great merit in the waking life after Samādhi. No doubt there is an element of truth in these statements. They are mere sign-posts in the sense that there is no limit to spiritual life; and they are considered as obstacles, because it is likely that in attending to them, the Name itself might be forgotten and the love with which it is uttered may diminish in its intensity. Yet from the truly spiritual point of view, it must be remembered that the visions, sounds and smells themselves constitute the Divine life, and so will never act as impediments, if the Sādhaka takes only the precaution of not forgetting the Name of God. "It is by the sight and contact of this spiritual object that great merit is accumulated", says Rāmadāsa; "and it is by holding conversation with it that doubts melt away." It is in this way only that the mystic grows in his experience.

8. The supernatural powers or the Siddhis, though admitted by Yoga as obstacles in the path of liberation are also described as the results of Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi, on certain objects and principles. The Siddhis in the Yoga of Devotion are simply by-products of meditation and love of God. In the house of a devotee, the "Riddhi-Siddhis

are, as it were, the drawers of water," says Tukārāma. Power is hand-maid to the Love of God. When the devotee is the creditor and God the debtor, what wonder is there that the devotee should become powerful ?

The saints consider Power as dirt when compared with Spiritual Knowledge. The desire to possess power indicates that the physical body is considered as more important than the Spirit, as Rāmadāsa puts it. "The considerations of the body are the considerations of the fool and ignorant", says Tukārāma. God is realized only when all such desires for power, wealth, and glory are rooted out. The saints find nothing common between the powers and the love of God. Anything in the heavens and on the earth is so incomparably low when compared with God that Tukārāma does not care if he is starved and afflicted in the body, provided he remembers the Name of God.

In the lives of almost all the saints, miracles have taken place. In a way, it can therefore be said of these saints that they were the authors of the miracles, and, as such, they possessed the supernatural powers. The reason given however by the saints themselves for the occurrence of the miracles is that they occur because the saints live a meritorious life full of goodness and devotion. It is only God who works the miracles for them when it is absolutely necessary to protect the devotee and his reputation. Miracles are not wrought

or manufactured to order by the saints, though, very often, they possess the power to work them. It is a great boon to the devotee of God that, many a time, he does not know that he has come to possess a supernatural power, and if anything happens in a supernatural manner, he thinks that it is due not to his power, but to the grace of God, for which act he becomes all the more humble and grateful. The occurrence of a miracle, in short, is common to both Yoga and Devotion, and is, in a way, the test of whether power has been achieved or not. And yet, while in Yoga, it is attributed to the Yogic exercises and is always consciously brought about, in the Yoga of Devotion, it is attributed not only to the devotion of the devotee but also to the grace of God and comes about unconsciously for the devotee. And again, as Rāmadāsa and all other saints point out emphatically, miracle-mongering is no test of spiritual life.

9. The argument of the Yoga-Sūtras is perfectly cogent when it is stated that wonderful results follow as the moral qualities become firmly established in a person. Certainly, a person need not be afraid of anything in the world, if he has caused fear to none. This belief in the moral law as governing the universe in a just and equitable manner, and as demanding the behaviour in conformity to it, is really possible for a very few. Apart from this high ideal which is equally true, for Yoga and for

Devotion, we have to raise two questions, the answers to which will mark the distinction between them. The first question is, what constitutes any particular moral quality? The second is, whether it can be completely acquired independently of our attitude towards God? To take only one example of a moral quality, Ahimsā or compassion: Ahimsā is one of the five Yamas, which Yama, in its turn is one of the eight Angas of Yoga. According to the commentary of Vyāsa, it consists of “non-injury or non-malice to anybody in any manner and at any time”, and requires the further support of truthfulness etc. This quality is to be practised, along with other virtues, indefinitely till it is perfected. As opposed to this, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the Bhagavadgītā that “Notwithstanding the fact of having killed all these people, he neither kills anybody nor is killed by anybody.” (B.G. XVIII-17). This apparent contradiction is resolved by the author of the Bhagavadgītā into the further fact that such a person behaves without the sense of egoism; in other words, he had learnt the wisdom of looking at things *sub specie aeternitatis* rather than *sub specie humanis*. He is simply the instrument of God and as such is not bound by the actions.

Tukārāma defines compassion in much the same way as embracing two contradictory actions: “It is that quality which enables you to protect the beings and destroy the

wicked, at the same time." This definition of mercy fits in with the description of the two-fold mission of God on this earth, as described in the Bhagavadgītā (B.G. IV-8) viz., "the protection of the good, and the destruction of the evil-doers." We thus clearly see that according to the Bhagavadgītā and the teachings of the saints, the moral worth of the qualities is not due to the qualities *per se*, but to the spiritual or divine function that is served by them. In another Abhaṅga which Tukārāma is reported to have composed for relieving the acute bodily pain of Rāmeśvara-bhaṭṭa, he has expressed exactly the same idea as referred to above in the Yoga-Sūtra; but he explains that the wonderful result is not due to the moral quality so much as to the devotion to the Immanent Being in the hearts of all. To quote it: "If the mind is pure, then verily even enemies become friends; neither tigers nor serpents can hurt them in any way, poison may become nectar, the flames of fire become cool; all these things will happen when one knows that there is the same Immanent Being in the hearts of all."<sup>1</sup> In short, as the saints point out, the moral quality, whatever may be its content, gains all its strength and perfection only on account of the realization of God; and so the wonderful results that follow are mainly due to the realization of God.

10. Yoga is defined as the control or the

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Mahārāshtra, p. 275. .

suppression of the workings of the mind (Pā. I-2). No doubt self-control has its own and important place in the moral life, and without it the moral life is impossible. But as Jñāneśvara tells us, "The practice of Yoga, which involves the strength of Āsana, may, if at all, bring the senses under control." As opposed to this, if the Yogin meditates on God as directed by his spiritual teacher, he becomes, in the words of Jñāneśvara again, "full, inside and outside, of Sāttvika qualities. The strength of egoism disappears. He forgets the objects of sense. The senses lose their power.. The mind remains folded in the heart."<sup>1</sup> So the control that results from meditation is natural and certain, while that due to postures without meditation, is artificial, uncertain and attended with the risks of great relapses due to suppression of emotions. Along with self-control, as modern psychology tells us, transformation of emotions is of the greatest value even from the moral point of view. The emotions and the impulses are the sap of life; wisdom lies not in drying it up, but using it for new and higher purposes in life. Emotions of anger and love, for example, are of utmost value both for moral and spiritual life, if anger is developed into hatred and animosity for whatever is ugly and bad, and love into attachment, sincerity and devotion for whatever is truly good, noble and beautiful. Instead of living a life of indifference

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Mahārāshṭra, p. 122.

untouched by anger and love, which is of course not the meaning of what is meant by the life of a 'Sthitaprajña', a true servant of God will prefer fully to express both the emotions on proper occasions, and yet, paradoxically, remain unaffected by both of them. Anger and love are equally present and not present in a person who finds his peace in God. Such a person is morally great, because he knows the proportionate value of the different emotions in the building up of sentiments and character; he is also spiritually great because the various contradictory elements find their ultimate anchorage in God.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PATH: TYPES OF DEVOTION

THE mechanism of the spiritual life will be complete with the description of the way of meditation and surrender. Now that our Sādhaka has been equipped in all possible ways, we have but to give him in his hand the only worthy weapon of a spiritual soldier, *viz.*, the sword of meditative Ātma-Nivedana. With Viveka and Vairāgya to protect him, with the firm Yogic horse to give him the physical and mental balance, he will now march on to kill all the distinctions of the Avidyā and achieve the kingdom of God.

Devotion, as described in the Nārada-Bhakti-Sūtras and in the Śāṇḍilya-Sūtras, is an “intense, whole-hearted attachment to God.” In the beginning it is natural that a Sādhaka should feel drawn more to the Personal than to the Impersonal God. But if we remember that the Personal and the Impersonal are the two aspects of the Brahman as Tukārāma tells us, the love that is shown to the Personal will, in course of time, develop into the love for the Impersonal. It is a great mystery of the spiritual life that the Ātman or the Brahman which eludes all attempts to know it, and which



frustrates every kind of means, should become the target of devotion and meditation. Let us therefore begin at once with the nature and stages of this devotional life.

Nine types of devotion are mentioned in almost all good works of devotional literature of the saints of Mahārāshtra. We shall however follow Rāmadāsa in his treatment of the nine types and describe the characteristics of each one of them, and show how all of them are necessary for the realization of God. Logically it is not a good division, for the classes involve and overlap each other; and yet each has a peculiarity of its own and is therefore valuable to a more or less extent in its own way.

### 1. *Śravaṇa* :

Śravaṇa (hearing) of spiritual knowledge is a means which is throughout of great importance in the spiritual life. It is at the root of all knowledge whether spiritual or not; for one must first hear that which he does not know. Even when one is reading he must needs first hear the words which he reads and then understand them. And even when one recalls some words or meditates or constructs an idea in words, he cannot avoid mentally listening to that which he is recalling, meditating or constructing. The meaning of a word will never dawn on consciousness unless it is first heard along with the meaning of it. Similarly, when

the spiritual instruction is first imparted by the Guru as the symbol of God, it is heard by the aspirant ; and it must continue to be heard till (and even after) the spiritual knowledge, *i.e.*, the meaning of the word, or God Himself, becomes manifest. Of course, at the time of initiation the spiritual instruction is simply potent with the meaning of it ; but the meaning is given birth to gradually as the Sādhaka advances in his spiritual career.

It is a peculiar characteristic of Śravaṇa that the hearer becomes one with the meaning of the word, in the very moment when he understands the meaning of it, though in the very next moment, he may use the word and the meaning of it as objective entities separate from himself. Both epistemologically and metaphysically, we may say that knowledge consists in the identity of the knower and the known, or as Prof. Ranade would put it, in the “spiritual apperception” between them. Unless the speaker or the hearer of the word meets in the meaning of the word, there would be no knowledge of it. God-realization, which is the meaning of the spiritual instruction, will from this point of view, be apperceived by the devotee, only when he meditates upon it and hears it day in and day out. In other words, as the result of constant Śravaṇa, God, who constitutes the meaning but is hidden in the word or Logos, will manifest before the devotee and be experienced as one with him. When this feeling

of identity between the knower and the known, the subject and the object, the Jīva and the Śiva, or the Sādhaka who meditates on the Name of God and the God, remains constant and continuous for a number of moments, it constitutes what is known as unitive life or Samādhi. Śravaṇa therefore is both the beginning and the end of spiritual life.

Where there is no Śravaṇa or Manana (that is, attention directed to the meaning) there can be no peace ; there will be an illusion of being liberated. Whoever is on the spiritual path, whether aspirant, Sādhaka or Siddha, for him Śravaṇa is inevitable. It must be resorted to daily, just as food and water are taken daily. Liberation does not consist of a single event, so that, when it is over, the Sādhaka is not required to adopt the means of Śravaṇa. Every moment of life we must feel that we are free, and so every moment of life must be utilized in Śravaṇa. It produces in our mind love for God ; clears the doubts ; purifies the mind ; enables us to control it ; does away with the sense of egoism and with that of the material self ; creates in us non-attachment for the worldly objects ; sharpens the intellect and offers us real peace. Śravaṇa as a means of Śaṅga devotion, consists of hearing about the attributes and praises of God ; and as a means of Nirguṇa devotion, in the hearing of the Name of God. For a Sādhaka both are necessary, because they are

the means which are complementary to each other.

## 2. *Kīrtana* :

Kīrtana is another means which gives a great impetus to the spiritual development of the person who performs the Kīrtana as well as of those who attend it. It is a sort of public prayer which has not only a disciplinary value, but also a value due to suggestion and sympathetic feeling. The minds of them all work in unison and presumably for the common purpose of singing the glory of God. They act and react upon each other and so gain in the intensity of their devotion.

The Kīrtana should be done solely for the purpose of increasing the devotion to God and not for the purposes of becoming rich by accepting money in exchange for it, or for pleasing oneself and others by means of music and the descriptions of beautiful women. The desire for riches will make a man greedy, and people will become tired of him soon. Contemplation of women will necessarily make him and the people lose their moral courage. Similarly, it is very likely that they will be carried away by music and the play of instruments and forget God. Riches and women are definitely two great obstacles in the path of an aspirant. How can he think of God if his mind is full of the thoughts of money and woman? If, of course, one takes care to see

that one is not taken away from God, music and the various instruments will be very useful in increasing the pitch of one's devotion.

There must, above all, be a firm faith in singing the Name of God ; for it is the symbol of God. And yet, so far as Kīrtana is concerned, especially in a temple where it is being performed before an image, one should not speak in such a manner as will bring the Saguna devotion in disrepute. For the people who will hear him may cut short the life of devotion in two ways : "ignorance it is, they will say, to worship an image of God, as the Brahman alone is real" ; and when the occasion of Nirguna devotion would arise, they will know nothing about it on account of their own ignorance and confusion of ideas. Therefore one ought to be very cautious in speaking about Saguna and Nirguna devotion at the proper moment and proper place. Before an image of God, he ought never to give a discourse on Nirguna, but should describe with enthusiasm and love the attributes and the praises of God. He may add to this the melody of voice, the music of the instrument, the clapping of the hands etc., and the audience will be so delighted with the concourse that they will be thrilled with joy and shed tears of joy. The Haridāsa (the man who performs the Kīrtana) too will be so intent on Gōd that he will forget his bodily consciousness, forget the presence of the people around him

and will dance and sing without reserve or shame. Being filled with ecstasy and devotion, wherever he casts his eye, he will see nothing but God. People too will catch up the emotion, forget their egoism and sense of shame and will irresistibly get up and begin to dance and sing the Name and glory of God. They will gather again and again and fill up the heavens with their loud praises of God. No wonder if such an assembly should feel that they breathe a common air and live a common life; and no wonder if such a feeling be considered as a veritable means of promoting and spreading the love of God.

While Śravaṇa is both Saḡuṇa and Nirḡuṇa, Kīrtana is Saḡuṇa devotion only. It is known as Nirūpaṇa when one gives a philosophical discourse to the audience. Kīrtana (including Bhajana) and Nirūpaṇa involve Śravaṇa Bhakti too; yet as described above, they have their peculiar characteristics.

### 3. *Smarāṇa* :

Smarāṇa or remembering the Name of God is yet another means of spiritual progress. In a way, it is the only means of God-realization as we shall point it out after we have done with the various kinds of devotion. In Chapter III we have remarked that the secret of knowing God must be learnt from the mystics who have already realized Him; no one else has the power to

show us the way. Some one must reveal the knowledge. To this extent, we most frankly admit that spiritual knowledge is 'Revealed' knowledge; and to this extent, the aspirant who receives the spiritual instruction and the Guru who imparts it together form an 'esoteric' circle. However much we may think about it, the relation between the Name as the symbol of God and God Himself is a great mystery. We have no other means of testing this mysterious knowledge as a fact, except by actual experience. To the question, why we should expect that God will be realized by means of meditation on the Name of God, there are only two possible answers. One is that experience alone can prove it. The other is that there is the consensus of opinions of all the mystics the world over, who, as Prof. Ranade says, have "no racial, no communal, no national prejudices among them," but on the contrary, have "a personal, common, intimate, mystical experience."<sup>1</sup> To doubt the testimony of the greatest mystics of all times and climes, some of whom are also great rationalists, will in no way appear justifiable. Meditation on the Name of God will be the only means of not only realizing God but also of warding off all evils, difficulties, and temptations, and of acquiring moral worth, mental peace and intellectual clarification. How to meditate upon the Name and when to

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Mahārāshtra, Preface, pp. 2, 3, 16.

meditate will be very interesting problems which we shall take up in the next chapter.

Smaraṇa, whether it is loudly done, as if from house-tops or in mind, involves shravaṇa. There is, strictly speaking, no harm in celebrating the Name loudly from house-tops ; but the aspirant is naturally shy of the people, and should not, as a matter of fact, invite ridicule from them. For this as for other reasons, as we shall see, Smaraṇa should be only mental. If the Name is uttered loudly, it may appear that it is Saḡuṇa-Bhakti on a par with Kīrtana. Be it noted, however, that in all cases, the uttering of God's Name (as given by the Guru) is nothing but Nirḡuṇa-Bhakti. If the Name be self-chosen, then as it is chosen on account of the attributes of God, which to our fancy are the connotation of that Name, the uttering of it may be said to constitute Saḡuṇa-Bhakti.

#### 4. *Pāda-Sevana*:

Pāda-Sevana, that is resorting to the feet, constitutes yet another kind of devotion, and a means of spiritual development. It will be Saḡuṇa devotion, when the devotee touches the feet or places his head on the feet of the image of God. But if there is no image, and if one wishes to have absolutely no anthropomorphic picture of God, how will it be possible for him to practise this form of devotion ? As an aspirant he is yet too far



off to have the mystic experience of seeing God's feet everywhere so that he will worship them at all places. But when this height of Nirguṇa-Bhakti is not available, and when the image of God does not please him, how should he proceed? He should, in that case, lower down his head in humility at the feet of his Guru, who is God incarnate, at once Saguna and Nirguṇa. On account of the physical body, his Guru is like a Saguna image of God; and on account of the fact that God has found a secure lodgment in his heart and is seen by him in all directions, the Guru is the immaculate Nirguṇa God Himself. To wait on such a Guru is to wait on God; to worship him and to serve him in all possible ways in order that he should be pleased is to serve and worship God.

But again, how is it possible that one person should be available for a number of disciples, for a worship of this kind? The Guru may not like it. It does not, many a time, look well to do so; and there is the danger that the practice may degenerate into many ignoble forms of superstition and ignorance. And yet what should one do if unfortunately the physical body of the Guru be destroyed by death or if the Guru is away at a great distance? Pāda-sevana does not mean literally the 'Sevana' of the physical feet. It should be interpreted rather liberally. If the Guru is to be honoured as God, then certainly what he asks us to do must

be relied upon with trust. The Guru hands over the most precious thing in all the universe. He shows us the way to God and imparts to us spiritual knowledge which must be believed in and grown up into a huge tree by our efforts. To do that which he has told us to do, to meditate, in other words, on the Name of God with humility and regard is to give all honour to him and to God, and is verily the real shampooing of his feet and the rendering of any other service to him. Another thing which we may do is to remember him with regard and reverence, and mentally fall prostrate at his feet as a token of gratitude.

#### 5. *Archana* :

Archana or worship is still another kind of devotion. It consists in the actual or mental worship of the various images of God, and offering to Him the best things which the devotee wishes to keep for himself. When there is neither the image nor the material with which he should worship it, he should create by imagination both of them and have the satisfaction of performing the worship. Even such mental worship has its utility. When the best things in life which we cherish most and wish to have for ourselves are offered to God even mentally, it constitutes the first lesson in dedication and surrender to God which is the end of all devotion. Non-attachment to the worldly life cannot be achieved all of

a sudden, and without it there will be no development of spiritual life worth the name. The older in age one becomes, the greater the attachment one feels for the pleasures of Saṁsāra. The only way in which dispassion or non-attachment will arise and grow in us is by securing the love of God; and one of the ways in which we shall secure the love of God is by offering Him the best things in our life.

It is ordinary commonsense knowledge that we offer decent presents to those whom we love and expect their love in return. God's love is infinitely superior to human love; it does not however expect precious things from us, but only the sincerity and love with which we make the offerings. That is why God equally welcomes things which are good, bad or indifferent. It is not the quality of the things offered but the quality of the mind with which the things are offered to God, that is tested. It is for this purpose, as Rāmadāsa tells us, that whatever we do physically or mentally, or whatever is dear to us, whether wealth or any other precious thing in life, we should dedicate with the purest motive to God. Jñāneśvara too echoes the same sentiment when he tells us that actionlessness may be secured by the offering of the flowers of all our actions to God, without egoistically attributing them to ourselves. In short, the real Archana-Bhakti elevates us from the mere idol-worship, where such things as water and flowers are used,

to a continuous, life-long, heart-felt worship of God, where the entire current of life, whether good or bad, is dedicated to God or to the Guru without the least sense of egoism.

#### 6. *Namaskāra* :

Closely akin to Archana is the kind of devotion expressed by Namaskāra, that is bowing down or prostrating before God or God-like persons, without any thought or hesitation. If Ahaṁkāra or egoism is to be avoided, it must be replaced by its opposite quality, namely, humility; and the best way to express and cultivate this spiritual quality is physically or mentally to bow down one's head with reverence and awe for God. It is the easiest way in which our sins will be forgiven by God and His grace will descend on us. It is the epitome of all spiritual virtues, *viz.*, non-egoism, humility, dedication, worship, surrender, and the waiting with hope and faith for the grace of God. How can God neglect His devotee who submits his will in utter humility? Assuredly, he is lifted into the kingdom of God.

#### 7. *Dāśya* :

Next comes Dāśya or the service of God. In spite of the identity between the Jīva and the Śiva, the devotee of God will always consider that he is one of the humblest servants of God. As such, he will undertake to do anything, which will ordinarily be below his dignity or unbecoming

to his social position, but which, when done, will enhance the cause of God-realization. He will not mind even cleaning the precincts of the temple of God, if need be, or render physical service to those who love God. For service given to the people of God is really service given to God. It does not, however, include the service that is rendered to Godless humanity, though from the social point of view, it may be the highest service. The service which is done by building schools, hospitals and sanatoriums, may be the highest social and moral service, but is in no way a spiritual service, unless it turns the people who receive it towards God.

#### 8. *Sakhyatva* :

*Sakhyatva* or Friendship of God is a type of devotion which is most difficult to practise. It is possible only for an advanced *Sādhaka*, and presupposes in him great insight, faith and sincerity. It is the confluence of the devotion of man and the grace of God ; it is at once the test of devotion and almost the culmination of it ; and it brings about the reconciliation of the sense of creaturehood and dependence inevitable in a devotee with that of equality and friendship. Though there is the perpetual surrender of his will to the will of God, and though there may arise occasions when he has to give up his personal convenience, pleasures, relations and everything, including even his life,

the true devotee will never consider it as a price too high for the friendship of God. The ordinary human friendship depends on barter, on a sort of give-and-take, on compromise; the Friendship of God can arise only out of an uncompromising determination to lose all, if need be. Men who profess their friendship most may desert us in our crises and perplexities; God, who appears to be indifferent to us in spite of our sacrifices, is really never so. He simply "watches our little courage with kindness," as Rāmadāsa says, and will verily be a "protective adamant" to us, if we simply try to seek His love by always succumbing without any complaint to His will.

It may appear in the beginning that God does not reciprocate His love, that His will is adverse to our will, and that in spite of our devotion and our expectation that He would help us, He leaves us uncared for and disappointed. This is sufficient reason for an impatient devotee to become angry with God, to grow sick of Him, and even to hate Him. So the utmost caution and courage are required in not allowing ourselves to turn down our spiritual life in despair, simply because our petty desires are not fulfilled. To win the love of God is no joke. People vainly call God the author of all things and activities; they do not believe it from the bottom of their heart. A true devotee, on the other hand, should always remember that the Friendship of God

will never break, and that His grace will never diminish ; and if he suffers disappointment and difficulties, he should suffer them calmly and courageously in the Name of God, thinking that God wished it all. Suffering and disappointment are a necessary, integral part of the spiritual life. Without them spiritual life is not tested. As Rāmadāsa says, " Rāma tests the quality of the mind of those who meditate upon His Name." Till this test is made, and the devotee stands it, the spiritual life is bound to appear as a one-sided life, proceeding from the devotee to God, and not from God to the devotee in return. The devotee " works " ; but God appears to be indifferent, as He does not send His grace. The Chātaka bird waits upon the cloud ; the cloud may not send drops into its beak. Will the bird give up its longing for the cloud ? A true devotee too must ever be prepared to stand the test of God, meditating all the while on Him and asking for His grace to enable him to stand it. To meet such a devotee God too will be impatient ; and the anxious waiting of the devotee and his sufferings will be infinitely repaid by the kind touch of God.

Unlike human friendship, the key to achieve the Friendship of God is with the devotee alone ; so it rests finally with him whether God should be his friend or not. God being the innermost reality, nearer to one than one's own heart and breath, He can never be

deceived just as human friends are by outward smiles. Even the slightest change of heart is known to God, and so there arises the corresponding change in Him. If the devotee fails in his attitude of faith and love, even by the slightest degree, God, too, in that very moment, goes away considerably from his devotee. God is, as it were, the faithful echo or image of the devotee. He smiles if the devotee smiles ; He becomes angry if the devotee is angry ; and He is faithful if the devotee is faithful. Knowing this, and knowing that God is fully aware of even the most secret thoughts, the devotee should communicate all his thoughts, whether good, bad or wicked, to God without any sense of reserve or shame. The devotee should be truthful, at least, while speaking to God and his Guru. He need not fear either of them or be shameful ; for nothing intervenes between a disciple and his Guru, or between a devotee and God. With utmost confidence and truthfulness, and with loving reliance and sincerity, the devotee must try to bind himself with God. God will then appear as greater than mother, father, brother, friend or any other person whom we can consider as a loving, helping hand. If at all a name is wanted, we may call Him by any name—Mother, Father or Friend,

#### 9. *Ātma-Nivedana* :

Ātma-Nivedana comes last as the crowning phase of the devotional life. It consists in the



utter annihilation of the sense of egoism and bodily consciousness, as if by cutting off one's own head at the feet of God. It is the silent experience of the unitive life, of which no word can give any account. The surrender of the self to God is so complete, that the sense of separateness is lost, and there reigns the single unutterable blissful kingdom of the Ātman.

A philosophical approach by way of thought is, no doubt, possible ; but it is rather theoretical than practical. It is also hazardous and full of dangers, and so may be recommended as simply a help-mate to the surest royal road of devotion. "Rāma-Bhajana", as Rāmadāsa tells us, leads us to the knowledge of the Ātman, and thus, to the "apprehension of everything else as illusion. The whole perceptible universe vanishes as a dream before the eyes of one who has realized the Ātman." As opposed to this devotional way of realizing the Real and inferring the unreal world, there exists, as Rāmadāsa himself tells us, the philosophical way of thought and Imagination which leads us temporarily to feel the presence of the Real and the abiding Ātman. The philosophical way, therefore, though highly useful as an adjunct, appears to us as incomparably a low or even a questionable means of attaining this peak of spiritual knowledge.

Philosophically considered, Ātma-Nivedāna is possible in the following manner. If one begins to answer the question, 'Who am I?'

he will first eliminate the five elements, *viz.*, the earth, the water, the fire, the wind and the sky, because they constitute his 'body' only. He will say to himself that he is not the material self. Then he will in a similar manner eliminate successively his mind, intellect and egoism, as not constituting his 'I.' In this negative way, he will fall back on the Brahman, the Ātman or God as the only support and essence of this 'I.' He will however be convinced of this only intellectually and will not have any experience of it on that account. Rāmadāsa gives us a very powerful argument as to why the mere intellectualist can only understand the meaning of Ātma-Nivedana without realizing the Ātman, and that too, if he can avoid the deep pitfalls on the way, as pointed out to us by a real seer. In the first place, the material self, as constituted out of Avidyā (*i.e.*, containing in it no element of knowledge), has no other option but to construe the entire perceptible world as real, because the perceptible world, too, is constituted out of Avidyā. The conviction that "I am the body and the mind," is paired off by another relevant conviction that "the perceptible world is the real world." Avidyā has seen the like of her and has believed in it. But this is no seeing and believing in the opinion of one who is able to cross the Avidyā or the ignorance. The conviction that the perceptible world is the only reality has become itself a stumbling block in the way o

realization. Intellect soon learns that mere perceptibility is not the criterion of reality, and that sages and seers were not fools to give their verdict against the perceptible world. A person therefore comes to believe, in the second place, in an imperceptible world on the ground that the perceptible world is not abiding, and that it changes from moment to moment. On the one hand, there is now the intellectual conviction that the perceptible world is unreal; but, on the other hand, there is not the experience of God or the Ātman. Therefore the intellect now falls into another pitfall, viz., the "void". It is the vacant Absolute with which, sometimes, a mere intellectualist identifies himself and derives a sort of imaginative pleasure in doing so. As a matter of fact, such a person is simply an idler under the guise of the knower of the Brahman. He vainly feels the presence of the Brahman in him; it is nothing but the feeling of bodily and mental well-being. The same demon of bodily consciousness or Ahaṁkāra appears in the new form of his having identified himself with the Brahman. If it is not any object of the perceptible world as object of consciousness, and if at the same time, the knower has the consciousness of having identified himself with something which he calls Brahman, then surely, it is not the realization of the Brahman or the Ātman but of the void or Nothingness. The experience of the Ātman or the Brahman means

that the subject becomes the *Ātman* or the Brahman ; it is only by the process of becoming that the *Ātman* can know the *Ātman*. The void, on the other hand, though it causes the illusion of mistaking the servant for the king, remains distinct as an object from the subject. The void or Nothingness (*Śūnyatva*) is then another great obstacle which must be overcome before one can expect to have the *Ātmanic* knowledge.

The perceptible world and the ocean of Nothingness having been overcome, the intellect has yet to grapple with a formidable hindrance on the way to Brahman. *Prakṛti* or *Māyā* or the whole of the changing world appears as an objective reality, on account of *Kalpanā* or *Vṛtti* or imagination. The world of change is said to be composed of eight parts, *viz.*, the five elements and the three qualities (*Guṇas*), and is ultimately born in its subtlest form of *Ahaṁkāra* in the non-changing eternal Brahman. So the *Prakṛti* or the *Māyā*, or the world of change, is nothing but a ripple of consciousness of "I am," on the still waters of the Brahman. Now this *Vṛtti* or *Kalpanā* or *Sphurtirūpa Ahaṁkāra* in the *Nirguṇa* Brahman is what is known as *Mula-Māyā*. With reference to consciousness, ignorance, and the mixture of the two, the same is known as *Guṇa-Māyā* ; and the two together *Mula-Māyā* and *Guṇa-Māyā* in their gross form of the material, perceptible, changing world is known as *Chāṇchala Māyā* or

simply Avidyā. And again that element of consciousness which is universally present in all beings, and is the cause of all the activities of sense and the sensible world, is supposed by the intellectualists to be the Seer, the Spectator or the Intelligent Being, and is worshipped in a philosophical manner by the so-called 'wise' among men. This is however a more fashionable way of the philosophers themselves of missing God than the two which they condemn, *viz.*, worshipping idols and incarnations. The unchanging Brahman remains as ever unchanged and no element of the world of change can ever be compared with that which does not change. To realize therefore the unchanging God is once again impossible for the intellect of the changing world. The way of realization lies elsewhere.

In spite of her defeat, however, the intellect has been useful in pointing out to us the giddy heights of Ātma-Nivedana. In two more ways, let us try to have an intellectual approach to the same. Viveka-Pralaya, or the intellectual dissolution of the constituents of the changing world, is one of them. It consists in imagining that the effect merges or is dissolved in its cause. The earth, for example, if imagined to be burnt into a small heap of ashes, will be further imagined to be dissolved in water. Water in its turn can be imagined to be dried up by subterranean and terrestrial fires, as also by the Sun and the lightning. The fire in its turn is

imagined to be extinguished by wind ; and the wind, being but a small breeze in the infinite space, will melt away into nothing. When this breath of consciousness too does not exist as a separate entity, there remains no trace of the entire changing world, including the self (as the principle of consciousness). With the vanishing of imagination, of the cause of the phenomenal world and the phenomenal self, of Prakṛti and of Puruṣa, there remains either the void or the eternal Puruṣa, for the imagination to fall back upon. The idea of the void must be brushed aside, if, as seen above, we are to avoid a pitfall. The Ātman is now the only resting place of the intellect and the imagination.

In yet another way, the intellect and the imagination come perilously close to Ātma-Nivedana. Just as the human span of life is nothing when compared with the life-time of a nation ; the life of a nation is nothing when compared with that of the earth ; the geological, nothing before the astronomical ; or again, just as when we measure distance in terms of light-years, we find that the space occupied by the earth (as Sir James Jeans says) will hardly be equal to that of a needle-head ; even so, if we begin to imagine ourselves as larger than the universe, the latter will appear smaller and smaller ; say first, as a cricket ball, then as an apple, and then again as mustard seed. These dimensions too the universe will soon lose, and it will be as good as non-existent, if

we continue to imagine ourselves as larger and larger still. But the moment the universe will vanish, we too will vanish, so far as our consciousness of ourselves as separated from the universe is concerned. The imagination or the *Vṛtti* will itself be torn into pieces in the attempt to approximate to the dimensions of the Infinite, like the frog which burst its belly and died in its attempt to become as big as the bull.

The absence of any *Vṛtti* does not however mean that we have attained *Nivṛttipada*, or *Unmani-Avasthā*, or the super-consciousness, where the subject-object relation does not enter. This state of the unitive life with the *Ātman* is a positive life. The state of mind produced by *Viveka-Pralaya* or by expansion of *Vṛtti* to such an extent that it ceases to exist is a negative one. On no account the negative life, which is once again the void or Nothingness, can be a substitute for the positive life of *Ātma-Nivedana*. By no stretch of imagination or intellectual trick can we live that life. Intellect and imagination will only give us a philosophical justification of that life by successively negating the reality of the perceptible world, of the void, of the phenomenal world of change, and of a mental state from which *Vṛtti* has been driven out. The only way to *Ātma-Nivedana* lies through ceaseless devotion, meditation, spiritual experience and the grace of God.

So far, in our discussion of Ātma-Nivedana, we have seen that the bodily consciousness and Ahaṁkāra are the two inveterate foes that must be killed before we can expect to have the joy of unitive life. Otherwise there would be the egoism or the void. Meditation on the Name of God is the only way to escape through the two horns of the dilemma and reach God, and through Him the God-head, as Eckhart would put it. "Test it by your own experience," says Rāmadāsa, "that the waters of the Ganges of Meditation purify the world of Change." As observed already while discussing Śravaṇa-Bhakti, the Name is the symbol of God, and if meditated upon properly, will be able to manifest God. On the one hand, meditation and, Bhajana are antidotes against the bodily consciousness; on the other, they bring home to a devotee the conviction that when the egoism is excluded, there is nothing but God inside and outside. To meditate truly on the Name, as we shall see after a while, is to establish the identity between the meditator and the Name that is meditated upon; and this can be achieved only by listening or attending with great care to the meaning of the Name when it is uttered or remembered. There will arise such a perfect coalition of the meditator and the symbol of God, that it is but one step further to say that the devotee, especially in moments of ecstasy and joy, when he will forget his bodily



consciousness and the consciousness of his surroundings, will be one with the immaculate form of God. When the consciousness of the body and of the surrounding objects ceases to be, the sage does not fall in a vacant Nothing, but is rapt up with Divine consciousness. When this Divine consciousness becomes intense and endures for a considerable length of time, God does not appear as a being other than the devotee, but as one, constant, immaculate Form which is at once the essence of God and the Self. The devotee, in the process of his meditation, sacrifices, one after another, his material social and psychical self. He is automatically driven away from the consciousness or Ahaṁkāra of body, mind, and intellect. In other words, irresistibly and naturally, he so surrenders his self to God by the power of his meditation, that he becomes one (Ananya, *i.e.*, non-other) with God. The non-dualistic, advaitic doctrine of the Vedānta, becomes for the devotee a practical life. Of course, it admits of degrees; consequently, Ātma-Nivedana, too, is a process which admits of approximation.

We may put this point in a different way as Rāmadāsa has done it. There are, says Rāmadāsa, two kinds of Kalpanā or Imagination or ideas, pure and impure. An idea or thought can always be expressed by means of words. The name of God, from this point of view, is nothing but a word, which stands as a symbol or vehicle for one thought or for one idea. Now,

that idea or Kalpanā is said to be pure which is about God ; and that impure, which is about any other object but God. If the pure Kalpanā gathers strength, then naturally the impure ideas fall away. The mind cannot hold them together for a long time. Gradually either the Divine or the non-Divine ideas must be shut out. If the devotee is well fixed in the meditation of the one pure idea about God, then gradually he will turn his back on other impure ideas, which remind him of objects other than God. Dualism thus dwindles and advaitic experience dawns on him.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PATH : MEDITATION AND SURRENDER

IN the last chapter, we have discussed the nine kinds of devotion with the peculiar features and implications of every one of them. They do not form nine water-tight compartments, but to a more or less extent, as already stated, imply each other. Śravaṇa, Kīrtana and Smaraṇa may be said, however, to form one group; Archana, Pādasevana, Vandana and Dāsyā to form another; and Sakhya and Ātmanivedana, the third. Temperamentally, one person may be more submissive than meditative; another, more meditative than submissive; and, a third, may be equally both meditative and submissive. By whatever avenue of devotion one may go, without Ātmanivedana or the unitive life of surrender and meditation, there will be no stop to the round of birth and death, no achieving of final liberation. We have said a good deal about the meaning and nature of self-surrender, and also to a certain extent about meditation; in this chapter, we shall attempt to describe the nature and the commonly accepted method of true meditation. As for the moral and physical effects of meditation, we shall discuss them in another chapter.

True meditation means the celebration of the Name of God. As the symbol of God, it is the only imperishable thing in this mortal fair and the only driving power of spiritual life. Being holiest among the holy and the most powerful and efficacious means of attaining moral and spiritual gains, there are absolutely no restrictions of place and time, of caste and creed, of being sinful or otherwise, and of sex and age, on the utterance of the Name of God. It is at once the beginning and the end of spiritual life, the support of it, and the epitome of all the forms of devotion. It is Sravaṇa and Manana, because it involves the hearing of it and the attention required to understand the meaning ; it is Kīrtana, if it is uttered loudly and in the company of the saints. The Guru and the God meet in confluence, as it were, in the Name. The Name therefore binds the devotee at the foot of the chair of the Guru or of God, and involves Pādasevana, Archana, Vandana and Dāśya. The Name is the only thing most beloved to God, and so, by meditation upon that, the bond of friendship is forged between the devotee and the God. And finally, as explained earlier, the Name makes the devotee forget the self entirely and attain to Godhood. The celebration of the Name brings about also the highest prize of devotion, *viz.*, the illumination of a beatific life.

No method of meditation would be required, if it is possible to utter or remember the Name

of God without cessation. To utter it appears so simple a task as would require no method or no special effort. But if there be anything difficult in this world, it is to form the habit of meditating on the Name constantly, daily and without any break. If the practice of meditation should become habitual, then, indeed, without any metaphor or exaggeration, there is no measure to a man's fortune. Persons who are ignorant about the efficacy of the Name, or those who are proud of their knowledge will say that to utter the Name of God is either foolish or at best only a preliminary way which has its utility in purifying the mind. Such persons we should excuse or ignore. Rather, we should go by the way of the saints who have unanimously acknowledged the supremacy of meditation on the Name, and should try to practise that art as they have practised it. Only then we shall come to know that ceaseless meditation is possible as the result of a long, continuous, methodical and deliberate practice of it. Unless there is strenuous effort and moral backing, there will be no concentration of mind; and unless the attention is firmly fixed, there will be no love and liking for the Name and no spiritual experience. And unless, again, paradoxically, there is love and liking for the Name and a growing spiritual experience, there will never occur the uninterrupted meditation on God.

In the beginning, then, as Jñāneśvara tells, choose for meditation a place which is

free from disturbance of any kind, and free from fear and gloom. If the place is known to be frequented by wild beasts or people of the town, it must be immediately avoided. There is no sense in courting dangers and the ridicule of the world. Besides, the mind of a novice will be disturbed even by the thought of a possible disturbance. It will think of a serpent or a wild beast or some other person rather than meditate on God. There is no sense also in exposing the body to the excesses of weather. The body must be always fit. The place of meditation, therefore, should be such as will afford a good shelter. It must again be free from shrill sounds and strong odours; for this will definitely distract the mind from meditation. The hubbub of the city, the roaring of the sea and the fierce blowing of the wind are physical obstacles even to the beginning of meditation.

The place for meditation must again be such as will please the mind. If it is a lonely temple or a cave, associated with the name of a saint who had practised his meditations there, it should be chosen by all means. For in the first place, there will be the good atmosphere of the temple, and secondly, there will arise the good suggestion in the mind that the place has been sanctified by penance; and this is no small encouragement for the novice.

The *Āsana* or posture of the body is also of great utility in meditation. "*Sthirasukha-*

*māsanam*” is a very good definition of the bodily posture as given by the Yoga-Sūtras. It must have two characteristics, of being steady or composed, and of bringing a sense of comfort. It is not our business, nor have we space to discuss the comparative utility of the scores of postures that are recommended. We should choose that posture which will be extremely useful to us in meditation. It should not only free us from sleep and slothfulness, but also make us composed and joyful and make us feel as not to give up that posture altogether. The postures that are however generally recommended are those which are known as ‘Padmāsana’, ‘Siddhāsana’ or ‘Vajrāsana’ with slight variations with regard to the position of the feet. One is recommended to sit with crossed legs, keep the spinal cord and the head in a straight line, and look in the direction of the tip of the nose. This being a natural and easy posture is free from defects which may be found in other postures. If you stand and meditate, attention may be diverted in the effort to maintain the equilibrium of the body, or else there is the likelihood of your falling. If you walk and meditate, you have to divide the attention between meditation and guiding your steps along the road. If you lie down and meditate you may soon fall asleep. But if, as recommended above, you have the sitting posture, you have no such fear of either falling to the ground or falling

asleep, or of dividing the attention between meditation and the body. The body will as it were take care of itself; nay, the posture of Padmāsana or Siddhāsana is such as will free you, in course of time, from almost all bodily complaints, will relieve you from sleep and slothfulness and will increase your power of concentration. Besides, it will help you in your meditation of the Name by producing a proportion and rhythm in your breath and will make you feel that you are, as it were, taking in the energy from the outside world and storing it within you.

The condition of the mind of the meditator is no less important in the practice of meditation. We are told in the VI chapter of the Bhagavadgītā that the mind should be perfectly calm and free from cares, anxieties and fear at the time of meditation, and that, in order to achieve this, celibacy is recommended. Does this mean that a mind which is care-worn and down with fear is not at all fit for meditation? Cannot a man who is not a celibate practise spiritual exercise? This is not surely the meaning of the passage in the Bhagavadgītā. It only means that for a mind which is composed and fearless meditation will be easier; and that for a mind which is otherwise, it will be difficult, though not impossible. If the mind is free from cares, so much the better; but if it is not, it does not matter. For if meditation on God will not compose our mind,



why should we meditate at all? Without the least doubt, meditation has got the power to calm the mind. But an initial effort will not go without reward. The composed mind will make itself still more composed and stronger by resorting to meditation. How indeed can a mind which has been torn a hundred times and become sullied by ugly thoughts meditate on God even for a second? So there must be a genuine human effort ruthlessly to banish all ideas from the mind other than God, to empty it as far as possible in spite of worries and difficulties, and fill it with the Name of God. Very rarely is a man perfectly pure at heart. The spiritual task for almost all average human beings consists in emptying the mind of all God-less ideas, and filling it by the thought of God, or rather to be more accurate, it consists in so stuffing the mind with the Name of God that all ideas other than God will automatically be turned out. With the entry of God, the devil will naturally and inevitably go out.

There is no hard and fast rule regarding the manner in which one ought to meditate on the Name of God. Yet we shall presently describe the method which has been commonly adopted since the time of the Upanishads. One is advised to make the Prāṇa and Apāna, that is, the inhaling and the exhaling of breath of equal length and duration. Then, he is to so remember the Name as it will be mixed together with the ingoing and the outgoing breath.

There will thus be produced a peculiar rhythm which will make the meditator joyful and the process of meditation easy. The equality of length and duration of the breath will produce the equality in the number of the remembering of the Name and vice versa. No doubt, there will be some amount of effort required in the beginning to maintain the balance between breath and Name. But it will not be so great an effort as will be required in the Yogic practice of Prāṇāyāma. To be able to maintain the equality of the two breaths is itself a sort of yama or control over the prāṇa ; and that is sufficient for the purpose of the type of meditation we are discussing. When the Name is so meditated, it will appear to the meditator that it is being swung to and fro along with the swing of the wind (breath), as it were, and thus he will be combining very skilfully the two processes of yoga and devotion. The novice should not however mind the inequality of breaths, which may occur in the beginning in spite of his efforts ; for that will make him neglect the Name. What he ought to be most careful about is the recollection of the Name itself. Not that he should first equalize the breaths and then equalize the number of Names ; but utter the Name and, at the same time, attend to the fact that it is being uttered a particular number of times with the ingoing breath, and the same number of times with the outgoing breath. Breathe he must, in spite of himself ; the only voluntary

and difficult act is the utterance of the Name. If he takes care of the Name, then with only a very little strain the breath too will be found to keep time-proportion with the Name.

The blending or the soldering together of the breath and the Name constitutes the most important part of meditation. For it automatically sets up the identification between the meditator and that which is meditated upon. The mind too being intent upon and steadily fixed in remembering the Name, easily glides to and fro along with the swing of the breath, and is pleased to hear the Name it meditates upon. It soon loses its notorious capacity to attend to many things and loses itself in the confluence of the breath and the Name. There is no difference between 'Mana' and 'Pavana,' as the saints say. And so, if the Pavana or the breath is controlled, Mana or mind too is controlled. But the mind must have an object; and it is provided by the saints. To them the controlling of the mind means to make it concentrate on one object, *viz.*, the Name of God, and so incapacitate it to attend to other objects. Buddhi, then, in its turn, having only one object as set up by the mind, loses its function of deciding or discriminating and becomes steady by cognizing the self-same object of meditation. There will be, no doubt, the presence of 'Ahaṁkāra,' or the fact of being conscious that 'I am meditating;' but this spiritual consciousness is infinitely better than the worldly

one. Yet this too will go away in the ecstatic moments of unitive life, or in the Samādhi of meditation, about which the only description would be that the Ātman is blissfully sporting with the Ātman.

When the meditation becomes intense, prolonged and blissful there occurs many a time, 'Sahaja-Kumbhaka' or the easy natural suspension of breath. The object of mystical experience, whether it is light, vision or sound, arises as the result of the constant churning of the two breaths blended with the Name of God, and becomes so engrossing and attractive that the devotional Yogin suspends his breath, lest the vision or the sound may disappear. His mind becomes so steady that it is aptly compared in the Bhagavadgītā with the flame of a lamp, which is steady on account of there being no disturbance of the wind. He feels he should continue to remain in the blissful condition; and he becomes so firm by his meditation, that no amount of misery will even do so much as touch him.

To attain this state of oneness with God, the meditator should note the following with profit. Firstly, the body must gradually be trained to overcome the discomfort and the aching due to the posture, and the Siddhāsana or Padmāsana maintained from three to four or even to six hours at a stretch. At the start, the body will be kept in a particular posture for only a quarter of an hour; and it may take

a year or two or even more for the meditator to maintain the equilibrium with ease for a period of several hours. With the accomplishment of the Āsana, the meditator will gain a victory over the physical diseases and will get ample power to resist the temptations of the mind as well. While the body is steady on the Āsana, how long will the mind disturb him by evil thoughts? The body is not allowed to move to execute the evil thoughts into action; naturally, the mind too will be tired and lend itself to the meditation of God.

Secondly, the mind, as observed above, will lose much of its notorious activity in attending to an indefinite number of things one after another, inasmuch as along with the breaths it will be closely tied to the Name. If unawares, any thought other than God would enter the mind, the meditator should not try to turn it out forcibly. For to try to forget an idea is to remember it all the more; and even if it is removed forcibly, it will return with greater force. So the best way to remove the evil thoughts is to coax the mind with some gentle suggestion in the form of a saying from a saint, and to utter the Name of God with force and concentration. The mind then, like a good faithful horse, will dismount the traitor and welcome its Master to ride it. The mind will thus be a slave in the hands of the meditator.

Thirdly, if there be a sufficient number of meditator-friends, who would assemble together

for the purpose of meditation, then turn by turn one of them should loudly read out passages from spiritual literature, and all the others should engage themselves in meditation. This method is highly efficacious in prolonging meditation, without the feeling of weariness or loneliness. For it is only in the spiritual company that the Sādhaka learns that he ought not to be jealous of another's progress, and that he gets all the encouragement and incentive for continuing the meditation. If he should feel tired or sleepy or indifferent, he will be immediately aware of the presence of others, especially of the spiritually elderly, and will be ashamed to run away from meditation. And even if he becomes too tired, or if it somehow becomes impossible for him to meditate further, there is the second best on which he can fall back for rest and comfort. He can attend to the spiritual passages that are being read out, and have recourse to Saguna-Bhakti in the meanwhile. After being relieved for a while, he can again begin his meditation or Nirguna-Bhakti. It is infinitely better for the mind to fall back upon the Saguna-Bhakti than to entertain Godless thoughts. As Rāmadāsa says, "You will certainly attain to Nirguna, on the strength of Saguna." If Nirguna meditation alone is impossible, let it then be supplemented by Saguna; and if meditation by one's self alone is impossible, let it be done in the spiritual company.

Occasional songs, in the next place, sung in

the praise and to the glory of God, before or during meditation, as also Bhajana and Kīrtana performed to the accompaniment of musical instruments immediately before meditation, give very powerful suggestions to the mind and incline it Sādhana-ward. Music can tune the mind to any sort of sentiment ; if it tunes the mind to the Infinite, on account of its subject-matter and on account of its melody, rhythm and ' Rāga,' then it is one of the greatest allies of meditation. But if instead music serves the purpose of Godless ' Śṛṅgāra ' or Sex-instinct, it is the worst enemy of the Sādhaka. Similarly, Bhajana and Kīrtana are highly serviceable adjuncts to meditation. They enhance the intensity and the duration of meditation, on account of the spiritually useful suggestions given to the mind ; but they will never be a substitute for meditation.

Regularity and moderation in diet, in sleep and other activities of the body, the moderate satisfaction of the senses, and the healthy condition of the body are further aids to meditation. There will be no good meditation, if the bowels are constipated, or if there be acute head-ache or other ailment, or again the natural appetites of the body, such as hunger and thirst, are not satisfied. To possess the company of the good and the holy, and to avoid that of the atheists, the agnostics, the erotic and the effeminate are also the necessary aids to the progress of spiritual life.

In the very process of advanced meditation, there are involved a number of aids, which we now mention and explain very briefly. By the advanced type of meditation we mean the meditation of an aspirant, who has had spiritual experience in one form or another. The spiritual experience, which is the outcome of meditation, itself serves the purpose of continuing the meditation further still; and the entire psycho-physical apparatus also will be found highly useful for spiritual experience. If, for example, the meditator has the photic experience, it will help him in this way: his eye-sight will now have a double duty to perform. It will, as before that experience, have its direction towards the tip of the nose; but now the direction of the eye-sight will be guaranteed, not by the physical object, *viz.*, the tip of the nose, but by the spiritual experience. The eye-sight now will be truly serving God. Similarly, if the meditator is fortunate enough to hear the mystic sound, his ears too will be doubly serving God; firstly, by listening to the Name of God, which he himself mentally utters; and secondly, by listening to the Anāhata (unstruck) sound. Similarly, the tongue will be doubly engaged, in uttering His Name and in tasting the sweetness of it. The nose will inhale and exhale the Name of God as it were, and experience the Divine perfume, never smelt before. The skin will enjoy the tremor, the sweat and the



coolness as well as the touch of the immaculate form of God. The hands will count the beads of the rosary or be folded in salutation. The head will be bent with reverence and awe and the mind attend to all these activities and be overjoyed with the fulness of God. The body will be felt as light as a feather, and will offer no difficulty in making a mental prostration before God and the Guru without itself being moved. In short, in this advanced condition of meditation, the entire body, with all its organs of sense and action, and the mind will work in unison for the glory of God. It is thus that meditation results in spiritual experience, and spiritual experience helps meditation again.

There are other forms of meditation which should be resorted to temporarily and occasionally. To meditate on the Name of God by means of counting the beads of a rosary is one such form of meditation. When it becomes impossible for one, on account of weakness, dullness or physical incapacity to sit for meditation, one should by all means take a rosary and count the beads for either a particular length of time or a particular number of the rounds of the rosary. The process may seem somewhat mechanical, but is of very great value. Ekanātha ridicules the idea of measuring that which is immeasurable; but what he means is that the spiritual quest has no end. There may be in the fold of devotees a person who may pretend that he is full of devotion by

simply holding a rosary in his hand, and occasionally counting the beads only as a show; or there may be a person who may not take a rosary for fear that others may criticise him (as one who advertises to others his act of devotion). One must, no doubt, guard against these possible evils in taking to meditation by means of a rosary. If one would take care to utter the Name of God distinctly to one's mind, and then only count a bead, the rosary will be found to be doubly useful, in producing, firstly, a sort of rhythm between the series of repetitions of the Name and the counting of the beads, and secondly, in doing away with the intrusion of other thoughts. The rosary of beads in the hand will soon produce a mental rosary of the repetitions of the Name which the devotee will be pleased to place round the neck of God. The rosary is significantly known by the name 'Smarani', for it enables one to remember the Name of God, as soon as one touches a bead. It will act as a good companion who keeps the novice awake in his meditations. Without a rosary, the novice may unknowingly fall asleep and not know how long he has slept; with a rosary he will immediately become aware that he is sleepy the moment he stops counting, or the rosary falls from his hand. Especially when the spiritual passages are being read, the rosary is the best means of enabling the novice easily to divide his attention and apply it to medita-

tion and the hearing of the passages. It will then be almost impossible for a Godless thought to enter into his mind ; for he is already doing the non-spiritual act of counting the beads of the physical rosary. In the absence of the rosary, the novice may continue in his mind an independent train of ideas and defeat the very purpose of attending to the meaning of the spiritual passages. The rosary thus serves greatly in enhancing the spiritual activity of a novice.

Occasionally, the process of meditation can be varied in one more way. The Name is inwardly uttered so loudly, intensely and frequently that it resembles the crying out of a person who is waylaid by robbers for succour. God is conceived as being far off ; and the devotee being impatient and helpless, and being unable to find anybody near at hand to save him, cries out inwardly and in rapid succession the Name of God. It is thus that the feelings of creaturehood and of dependence on God are heightened ; and consequently, with each uttering of the Name, the devotee makes a mental prostration before God. This process of ardently and impatiently crying out the Name of God cannot last for a long time ; but if employed now and then, it will produce finer emotions and increase the sweetness of the Name, and the love and regard for it. To proclaim and sing the Name of God from house-tops, without fear or shame, is also

occasionally resorted to, either because the devotee cannot remain satisfied without doing so, or because he wishes to drown in it the stress and storm of his physical and mental disturbances. It brings in the necessary relaxation of the body, and fills the mind with a new energy to go in for a silent meditation again. The loud uttering of the Name mentally or by speech in very close and rapid succession, and with sustained breath, is an excellent way of pounding and smashing out all god-less ideas of the mind. And so when all the anxieties and disturbances are over, the mind becomes pure and calm like still water, and the devotee sees in it the image of God.

Whatever may be the variations of mediation, all good and true meditation is on the Name of God alone, and on nothing else. When the devotee becomes so fortunate as to have a look at the Form of God, as a result of meditation, he does two things simultaneously; he looks at the Form and meditates on the Name. Then, very soon, he comes to have a love and regard for both the Form and the Name. No wonder then that the attraction of the Form and the sweetness of the Name should bind him indissolubly to his beloved, God.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NATURE OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

#### I

WITH morality on the one hand, and with unswerving, constant meditation on the other, an ardent devotee of God is bound to reap the harvest of spiritual experience. Ever since he is received in the sacred fold by the Guru, the grace of God is on him. The initiation itself is the greatest act of grace. That the devotee remains faithful on the path, in spite of obstacles and pitfalls, is again due to the constant grace of God. The toils alone would be of no avail, if God were not to send His grace. At every step and throughout the journey it is required, though all the while the sādḥaka is not conscious of it. Realization of God in some form or another is the first tangible, concrete event which will make him aware of the greatness of the Guru and the importance of the grace. He will now remember his Guru with the utmost gratitude and humility, and depending on the grace of God, will toil all the more to grow stronger in his spiritual experience by having more and more of it.

Various are the ways in which God will manifest Himself. He may appear as light or as a vision; be heard as sound or smelt as perfume; tasted as sweet or felt as delightful to the touch. He may again appear in the Form of the self of the devotees or of any other finite being or thing, or yet again as the Universal Self. Like a fixed and steady star He may appear in a mild form and attract the devotee, or may drown him in the ocean of miracles, by appearing in various, queer and fearful forms. Our task in the present chapter is not to prepare an inventory or a catalogue of these various forms of spiritual experience. It will serve no purpose besides creating a sort of vain and painful curiosity in the minds of those who believe, and an unthinking criticism and ridicule in the minds of those who do not believe. We have to steer our course between the two. Sufficient it is that we have shown the fringe of mystical experience; it will both be a guidance and a foretaste for those who have a desire and a will to have similar experiences, by treading the self-same toilsome path, which we have described at so great a length in the last four chapters. We shall therefore presently proceed to a careful examination of the characteristics of the spiritual experience, remembering all the while that the real from the metaphysical point of view is also real from the psychological or the experiential point of view; and that

nothing is metaphysically real which is not at the same time real psychically, that is, as forming part of the experience of some one.

This way of identifying the metaphysical with the experiential leaves room for illusions and hallucinations, as likely to be included in the domain of the Real; for they too are a part of experience as a whole. We shall have to be very cautious in distinguishing the Real from the illusory, especially in the field of spiritual experience, because it is the most personal and incommunicable. The fool, the rascal and the idiot may join hand with the wise, the honest and the mystic, and together declare that their experience is genuine and trustworthy, and therefore affords ground for metaphysical generalizations. We will have done a great service for the type of mystical religion we wish to uphold, if we succeed in categorically and definitely pointing out the exclusively peculiar characteristics of spiritual experience. In so doing, we shall restrict ourselves to the spiritual experience which appears in the form of a vision; for it will not unnecessarily complicate our procedure, but will have all the characteristics which we wish to point out. As experience is a complex matter, it goes without saying that we shall deal with it in all its aspects, subjective and objective as well as cognitive, affective and emotive.

To begin with, the object of spiritual

experience is unique and novel. It is unique because no experience will be found to correspond to it ; though by a sort of description we may try to give a very poor representation of it in sensuous imagery. Howsoever the imagination may try, no trace of it will be found in the huge store of the sensuous experience of the past. Memory will in vain scratch her head to fill up the gap by something between the sensuous and the suprasensuous. No amount of thinking will enable us to speak of it in terms of antecedent and consequent, cause and effect. It is impossible that we shall ever have it by a stroke of will. "It goes where it listeth," and like the appearance of a rainbow in the sky, is beyond our control. Intuition alone can grasp it.

It is novel in the sense that it is experienced for the first time, the like of it was never experienced before. In ordinary everyday experience, we talk of things being unique and novel, but when we have the like of them very often they lose their uniqueness and novelty. Not so the spiritual experience. For there is perpetual growth in it and so there is almost perpetually some aspect of it, which appears as unique and novel. Here custom does not blunt sensibility, but rather sharpens it. The growth and the change in it come off so suddenly that it strikes the mind with surprise. Again, it grows and changes either very slowly or suddenly. The manner in



which it will change or grow can never be foretold, nor even anticipated in a general way, as the change of our friend's behaviour or the growth of his friendship will be, on account of our acquaintance with his character and environment. There is neither any fixed and steady character or quality of it, nor any environment in respect to which it responds. Rāmadāsa asks us simply to be passive and watch it as it appears, lest it should vanish away as suddenly as it presents itself (at least in the case of a novice). This sudden appearance and disappearance and reappearance of its own accord and at its sweet pleasure is, indeed, unlike the objects of the perceptible world, unique and novel. With wonder piled upon wonders and over which he has no control, the aspirant is simply struck with the uniqueness and novelty of the spiritual experience, and so remains tongue-tied and silent.

Another characteristic of spiritual experience which, of course, can be explained as the natural, inevitable result of the characteristics we have just observed, is that it is attractive. We know that our attention is diverted and arrested by things in various ways. Things attract us because of their (1) movement, (2) novelty, (3) sudden occurrence, (4) glaring colours, (5) pitch, (6) intensity, (7) volume etc. The spiritual experience too arrests the attention in these various ways; but it has a peculiar sublimity of its own,

which not only arrests the attention but keeps the mind pinned to it for a longer time. A beautiful landscape, an evening sky with all its profuse hues, the roaring anger of a stormy sea, a young lady of a perfect form and exquisite beauty are all of them instances of things which captivate the soul. But there is a limit or a saturation point, beyond which the soul refuses to be pleased by the repetition of these experiences. And if any one of them is presented continuously without allowing the others to alternate, the sense of monotony comes all the more quickly. The spiritual experience also appears in various forms, so that with change and alteration the mind is immensely pleased. Yet, there is no limit to the soul's capacity for feeling the joy, or of the object (the vision, the sound, etc.) yielding this joy. There is a perpetual thirst for having more and more of it, and there is a perpetual supply of it. Even with the same experience day in and day out, and no other to alternate with it, the mind never has the sense of dull monotony. There is no ebb or flow to the fullness of joy, as Tukārāma says. The only limitation will be of the physical body which becomes tired because it is incapable of keeping pace with the mind. The body will require rest and so there will be perforce a retiring of the mind also. It is said that philosophy begins in wonder, but spiritual life not only begins but also grows and ends in wonder and joy.

The object of mystical experience besides being a source of joy is again, curiously and paradoxically, a source of fear also. We are told in the Bhagavadgītā that Arjuna was immensely pleased at the sight of the vision of the all-pervading Ātman, because the like of it was never seen before ; and at the same time he was exceedingly frightened when he witnessed the vision destroying everything before it. This mingling of opposite emotions is a peculiar phenomenon that attends some of the richest mystical experiences. No doubt, the sublime and the grand aspects of natural phenomena such as the vast expanse of the Ganges in floods seen from a high railway bridge, the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, and the starry sky above, inspire us with awe and delight. But the object of spiritual experience is so glorious in beauty, splendour and purity that it is not only awe-inspiring and lovable, but also has so powerful an influence on us that it compels us to bend our heads with humility and reverence for it. As Rudolf Otto says, it creates a "numinous" state of mind, which is "perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other." When analysed, it is found to possess the elements of "Tremendum," "Majestas" and "Energy" or "Urgency," that is, the elements of awfulness or shuddering, of being overpowered or of creature-consciousness, and of vitality and emotional force. The mystical object which is "wholly other," supreme and

powerful, creates in the first place, the shudder, on account of which "the soul, held speechless, trembles inwardly to the fullest fibre of its being." Secondly it creates the sense of creature-consciousness, due to which "the finite self becomes conscious of its nullity," and declares that "I am nought, Thou art all." Thirdly, it vitalizes the whole being of the man on account of the emotional stirring it gives rise to.<sup>1</sup>

This reverential attitude, when it is combined with devotion, makes the object almost a steady one. Unlike the sensuous objects of observation and introspection it is not evanescent. A white spot on a black surface, for instance, becomes invisible after a prolonged concentration. The emotion of anger loses much of its intensity and sting if it becomes itself the object of introspection. The object of mystical experience, on the contrary, gains in brightness and distinctness with greater and greater concentration; nay, when even the eyelids close on account of great strain, the object is still seen.

The object of mystical experience is further non-spatial and non-temporal. It cannot be located in space, or dated in time. Though, subjectively, space and time are involved in the experience of it, as in all sensuous experience, when, for example, a person (St. Paul) had had the first vision of God in a particular place (Damascus), at a particular time (noon), the vision,

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<sup>1</sup> The Idea of the Holy; Ch. III and Ch. IV; Pp. 8-23.

as vision objectively considered, is not limited by space and time. The things in my room are determined by the walls of my room and they shall be there so long as I wish to keep them in that way. But the vision, supposing it, for the sake of simplicity, to have made its appearance on the transparent glass of a window in the room, cannot be said to have been limited by the glass. For it is at once on this and on the other side of the glass, as well as on the glass itself. If I hold a paper between my eyes and the distant mountain which I see, my perception of the mountain will be obstructed by the sheet of paper. But the vision which was appearing on the mountain will, if a paper be held between the eye and the mountain, appear in exactly the same way on the paper itself. If the piece of paper be brought closer and closer to the eye, the vision will still appear on the paper and appear even within the eyelids. If one should try to catch hold of a thing by hand, the Brahman, says Rāmadāsa, will appear between the hand and the thing ; and similarly, if one were to open a book and try to read it, the Brahman would appear even on the page, the word and the alphabet.

For the mystical object, then, there is absolutely no barrier that will limit it ; and the language of distance and spatial dimensions has no meaning with reference to it. It is at once far away and near ; it is in all directions upwards and downwards. The very direction would

have some meaning with reference to some fixed point, which is in one place and not in another ; but the object of mystical experience appears in all places ; it is here, there and everywhere, simultaneously. It does not fill the space so that space is first and its being afterwards. The idea of space is a human, artificial production to account for the relatedness of things that limit each other. From the point of view of the one omnipresent, homogeneous reality, there is neither relatedness nor things that limit each other. Even the idea of space disappears during the moments of spiritual experience.

Time, too, like space is an element that is absolutely necessary for progress and development of any kind. And spiritual progress is no exception. The devotee gains everything gradually and in the fullness of time. What is then meant by saying that the object of mystical experience is non-temporal in its essence ?

Let us, in the first place, substitute for the negative term 'non-temporal' a positive one like 'eternal,' remembering that eternity is not the same thing as time, extended endlessly in both the directions of the past and the future. 'Eternity' and 'Time' (even endless time) have nothing in common though they are not incompatible with each other. We become aware of time on account of the struggle we have for something other than ourselves. There is a perpetual encroachment on this other,

which serves as an ideal, and the perpetual assimilation of the other with one's own self. And yet, in all sensuous experience there is at best a perfect resemblance but no identity. A John Stuart, may want to be an excellent historian like Macaulay ; he may become so in course of time, by imitating Macaulay in every respect ; but there will be resemblance between the two and no identity. The individuality of each will persist, and make them aware of the several points of difference between them. Time and the temporal flow of events will be apprehended and appreciated by both of them in different ways, so long as these differences exist ; so long as, to use the words of Leibnitz, they are both of them "Discernibles." Experience of an Identity (and not the intellectual understanding of the Logical Law of Identity) is the only form of life in which the sense of time is lost. To express this life by a remote analogy, we should take the case of lovers. They forget the sense of time in their deep sexual enjoyment. They live as it were a common life, and so they may be called, in the words of Leibnitz again, "Indiscernibles."

When Being is like Being, when it mirrors itself, or to be more accurate, when it projects itself into its own object, there is the self-same, identical life, which can never be discerned as two. In moments of ecstasy and rapture, when there is absolutely no trace of duality, or of the struggle of the finite to assimilate

itself with the Infinite, the whole sense of time and of duration is lost. The mystic who enjoys the vision of God is, during that moment of time, living also the eternal life, because that vision which appears to be there, out in space, is also pent up within him.

To proceed to a further characteristic, the object of mystical experience defies the logical law of Contradiction inasmuch as contradictory predicates can be asserted about it at the same time. Contradictions do not, however, go to form the mystical object in the manner of the Hegelian dialectic. It is not a synthesis of a prior thesis and an antithesis. Neither can it be said to follow from them, as the logical conclusion follows from the premises. When analysed, the object of mystical experience presents the contradictions as necessary elements or moments of a self-identical life. And again, the contradictory aspects of that experienced object are not of the logical nature, one positive and the other negative. Both are positive elements from the view-point of experience, though it bewilders the intellect of a student of formal logic. Even in our ordinary life we can find analogous examples of experience where the contradictory aspects of it are soldered together. 'To be or not to be' was such a complex question to Hamlet; our whole moral life is beset with conflicts of the opposites. Be it remembered, however, that the examples are taken by way of analogy and for the sake of illustration. The



opposites in the moral life, in the first place, are opposites which alternate with each other so that attention may be given to them easily and fully ; and secondly, they issue in a conduct which either suppresses one of them or both of them and finds a new departure. The mystical object is also unique in this respect that, presenting contradictions, it is not contradicted by any or both of them ; that the contradictions themselves have their being in the self-identity of the object so that there is no need that one of them must vanish to make room for the other ; or that both of them should vanish to give rise to a third some thing which would be the synthesis of the two. Contradictions are the ways in which the object becomes equally manifest, and so appear, to enter into the very constitution of Reality.

It is on account of this inherent, contradictory nature of the mystical object that it appears at once to be near and far off ; inside and outside of things ; undivided in spite of division and dividedness ; bereft of all qualities and full of them ; darker than the darkest, and brighter than the brightest ; smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest ; seen in front of one's face and seen at the same time in all directions ; and so on.

It is on account of this peculiar nature of mystical Reality, that the mystical experience also appears contradictory in nature. " As soon as we begin to be aware

of it, we forget it. But as soon as we forget it, it comes within the ken of our consciousness. When we go to see God we miss Him. But we see God without going anywhere to meet Him. This indeed is the virtue of spiritual *Epoche*.”<sup>1</sup> This means that inasmuch as the spiritual experience is a peculiar experience of oneness or identity, where there is absolutely no consciousness of the subject-object relation, to have such a consciousness of the difference between the subject or the devotee, and the object or the God, is to miss the essence of unitive, silent life. In the game of hide-and-seek of this spiritual knowledge, as Rāmadāsa tells us, one should be nothing in spite of his being everything. The treasure of this experience can be had by meditation alone. One who has attained to it gets a unique satisfaction which is not dependent on a prior want; one forgets the functioning of the mind, and of the senses in the silent enjoyment of God. That is why the blind and the deaf can have that experience. One who attains to it is a King of the spiritual world and can save others; one who does not is a beggar.

Another very difficult question we have to decide is whether motion can be attributed to the object of spiritual experience or not. Testimony is on both sides. The object is declared to be moving as well as steady and

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Mahārāṣṭra p. 410. •

fixed. With unimaginable speed, it is seen as moving from one direction to any other direction; with faithfulness, as it were, it accompanies the devotee and is sometimes fixed like a painted picture on a wall. Add to this the panorama of visions, and the problem becomes all the more complex. Again, the spiritual experience is found to change from one form into another, or transformed suddenly from one kind into another. Change and motion, like the change and motion of physical objects, appear to be the characteristics of spiritual experience as well. These are the paramount questions, both for physics and philosophy: Is change real? Is motion real? Are they objective or subjective?

Modern physics believes in relative motion and is of opinion that there is no absolute motion. Everything in the universe moves with reference to something else, which also is in motion. The sun, the moon and the stars move with reference to the ether or the space through which they travel; but the ether too, which is now replaced by another concept, *viz.*, the 'electro-magnetic field,' has its own movement and is not steady. That everything is in motion (though relatively) and nothing is at rest appears to be the verdict of modern science; and that eternal change is the aspect of the real would be the corresponding verdict in the philosophy of Heracleitus and Bergson. The question for us is: is the object of spiritual

experience endowed inevitably with the relative motion of modern physics or the Bergsonian change? Or can we challenge the truth of these stupendous verdicts and assert the old belief of something permanent which changes and with reference to that which does not change or move, motions of other things are explained? Are we to believe with Aristotle in an 'unmoved mover' of the universe or in an eternally moving and changing universe without the 'unmoved' mover? Or again, may we hope to reconcile these apparent contradictions in an experience which is at once the inexhaustible, permanent source and the continuously changing stream?

Two considerations will, we think, decide unambiguously and unhesitatingly this question in the manner of the third alternative suggested above. We have to note, first, the relation that exists between the subject and the object of spiritual experience, and secondly, the growth which takes place in this experience. The subject-object relation of spiritual experience is a peculiar one. It is not that the subject with some characteristics of its own is pitted against an object with some other characteristics. The subject becomes its own object and knows it; to say it in the fashion of Kantian terminology, the object is nothing but the spiritual counterpart or the analogue of the subject, a simple projection of it. That is why the physical object is seen only in the place

where it exists and not in any other place where it is not. A particular book in the shelf in front of me will be in that position and place unless it is disturbed. It will be in a particular direction with reference to me and will continue to be so unless I myself change the place I am now occupying. With the slightest change in my position or in the physical object, *e.g.*, the book, there will be a change in the cognition of it. The spiritual object, on the other hand, (supposing it is seen where the book was, and myself being in my former seat) can be seen in an identical, unchanged form anywhere on the line, drawn between the points indicating the place of the book and my seat. Whether the distance is cut short or increased, or whether there occurs any change in the size of the image (which the subject has of itself) or not, the mystical object will never be out of focus and so become dim or blurred. It remains as it was in its original glory in all its career from the beginning to end at any point between myself in the chair and the shelf there at a distance. There may be no change in it, if I myself move forward or backward. With myself as stationary and not moving or rotating round myself, and with a constant distance between myself and the object, I can have only one unaltered view of the physical object ; but even if I rotate round myself, and even if the distance between myself and the spiritual object changes, I can have the same experience of it

at any point on the circumference. In other words, I may view the spiritual object at any point in space in an unaltered identical manner.

In short, our conclusion, so far as the cognition of the spiritual object is concerned, is this: with alteration in the position in space of the subject, there may be no alteration of position in space of the object; and with no alterations in position in space of the subject, there may be any alteration of position in space of the object. In other words, the object may appear to move from place to place, even when the subject does not; or the object may not move at all, though the subject may, or both of them may move, or again, both of them may remain fixed and steady in an act of deep and absorbed contemplation.

Change and motion, then, are not incompatible with spiritual experience, though they cannot be said to be the necessary characteristic marks of Reality. If we however take into consideration the fact of growth in spiritual experience, we must, in spite of this metaphysical fact, say that they are essentially bound up with the life of devotion. When the Divine Form, as Rāmādāsa tells us, increases from that which resembles a smallest particle (*anu*) to that which envelopes the universe, he is telling us not a metaphysical theory, but an experience which evolves and undergoes a perpetual change. The object of

spiritual experience thus points out, on the one hand, the Absolute Reality which is beyond all change and motion, and on the other, a life of a finite being which, because of its growing experience, is essentially one of change and motion.

Experience being both the material and the test of Reality, the object of spiritual experience can be found to stand a number of tests to which no non-spiritual object in this world (*i.e.* the physical, the psychical etc.) will ever stand. It will be seen on fire, but instead of being burnt will be seen in the same place, after the fire is extinguished. It will be seen on the floods and will not be moistened or swept by them. It will stand stead-fast even though the swiftest winds blow over it. It will penetrate the adamant, and yet will not be penetrated or cut by the sharpest of instruments or weapons. It will take its place inside the eyelids and yet will not harm the eye on account of its extreme softness. Seen through the microscope or the telescope, it will retain its form and size without the slightest change. Appearing, as if reflected on a bright surface, it will never be reflected; for it would then be determined by the sensuous things. A white flower will appear red when looked at through a red piece of glass; the object of mystical experience will never be affected by the qualities of the sensuous world. It will not be darkened by the smoke, sullied

by the dirt, adorned by the flowers or illuminated by light. Nothing which does not stand these tests is real from the mystical point of view.

## II

The greatest caution however is required to discriminate between false visions and voices and true ones. For they may be due to unhealthy cerebral activity, illusions, psychosensorial hallucinations, epilepsy, hysteria, subliminal consciousness, etc.

"Vision, then, is recognized by the true contemplative," says Evelyn Underhill, "as at best an imperfect, oblique, and untrustworthy method of apprehension; it is ungovernable, capricious, liable to deception, and the greater its accompanying hallucination the more suspicious it becomes."<sup>1</sup> As visions and voices are parallel phenomena from the psychological point of view, an attempt has been made by E. Underhill to classify the visions into (1) Intellectual, (2) Imaginary, and (3) Corporeal, and the voices into (1) Substantial or inarticulate, (2) Interior and distinct, and (3) Exterior words. The articulate word, we are told, is inevitably subject to some degree of illusion, and the corporeal vision, to sensorial hallucination. The intellectual vision, like the inarticulate voice is undefinable, illusive and formless, though both

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism, p. 281; also Part II Ch. V.



of them are spiritually valuable. "The imaginary vision", says Underhill, "is the spontaneous and automatic activity of a power which all artists, all imaginative people, possess.... There is little real difference except in degree between Wordsworth's imaginary vision of the 'dancing daffodils' and Suso's of the dancing angels,.... though in the first the visionary is aware that the picture seen is supplied by memory, whilst in the second it arises spontaneously like a dream from the subliminal region."<sup>1</sup> The voices which correspond to the imaginary visions are nothing but self-created locutions, or rearrangements of thought.

In view of the nature of spiritual experience which we have discussed so fully in the first part of this chapter, we need not attempt to expose the hollowness and the misleading nature of such a classification of visions and voices. From the point of view of the saints of Mahārāshtra, the visions and voices are entirely the 'work of God.' There is no such thing as 'Internal' and 'External,' 'intellectual' and 'imaginary,' 'inarticulate' and 'sensorial' about them. They are not the externalization or materialization of any idea whether imagined or not. As such no question of their being illusions or hallucinations would arise. As a matter of fact, they cannot even be said to be mental or psychical; they are purely ontological in essence and value. We do not under-

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism, p. 285.

stand why such a person as Prof. A. R. Wadia, who rightly understands the value of Indian thought as a whole, should suspect the ontological value of visions and voices. "As psychical phenomena they have worth," says Prof. Wadia, "but whether they have ontological value is certainly open to question."<sup>1</sup> The visions (and voices) stand the various tests of Reality, while illusions and hallucinations can hardly be said to stand any one of them. For a mystic they are the signs of the presence of God, unquestionably objective and coming from the unseen, transcendental world. As St. Teresa says, "judging from the brightness in which He was pleased to show himself,.... it would be absurd to suppose that the one (a painted picture) bears any resemblance whatever to the other (the vision of Christ)."<sup>2</sup>

Some visions and sounds are so intense, articulate, growing and permanent even in the waking life of the mystic, that they accompany him wherever he goes. "You are my companion, wherever I go," says Tukārāma, addressing the vision he sees. The fact that sometimes visions and voices are simultaneously experienced and found to corroborate each other, is an additional proof of the objective validity of these experiences. St. Paul not only saw the vision, but also heard the voice simultaneously, saying that the vision he had seen was from

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Underhill, Mysticism, p. 288-89.

Christ alone. Jñāneśvara too saw the vision in the courtyard and simultaneously heard the voice of God. Just as there is the thunder and the lightning in the physical world, even so the voice and the vision are in the world spiritual.

They may have symbolic value and be useful to all types of creative genius ; but their greatest value for spiritual purposes is shown by the fact that they sometimes arrive at the time of initiation, intervene between one spiritual state and another, and silence all indecisions by authoritative command or guidance. Real visions and voices may also be had in dreams. Musical sounds again are as objectively real as voices and visions, and being the indications, of Divine presence, are helpful to us in our meditation.

Ecstasy and rapture indicate contemplation at its highest pitch ; and the riotous enjoyment of God, which is only possible in the condition of rapture, is really the apex of blessedness. The ego is almost completely abandoned ; and though there is no conscious surrender of finite will to the Divine will, the way is paved for it. As they enhance the vitality, joy and health of the mind and as they have absolutely no depressing effect, they cannot be compared with epileptic fits, hysteria, sleep, intoxicated condition or the condition after a 'hot-bath,' as Leuba wishes to put it.

CHAPTER IX

EFFECTS OF MEDITATION

AND

OF GOD-REALIZATION

THE realization of God being the highest pursuit of man's life, it is very necessary to have certain criteria by which we shall be able to judge whether a particular man has or has not realized God in his life. Meditation, again, on the Name of God being the only means to realize God, it is worthwhile to note also the effects of a continued ceaseless meditation. At the outset, however, we must bear in mind two things regarding the nature of spiritual life. One is that the spiritual life is capable of being shared by us all in degree, and therefore to the degree to which a person stands the test of the criteria he can be said to have appropriated the life of the spirit. There being this constant approximation to God-hood, and no finality of it in the life of a man, we shall note that the criteria too must, in the first place, be such as will be able to evaluate the various mystics in the search for reality. The criteria we are going to suggest will, in the first place, distinguish those who have realized God at least to a

certain extent from those who have not. And secondly, they will give us a standard or norm by which we shall be able to fix the position of the various types of mystics in the scale of Being. For example, a poet may be found to possess certain marks possessed by a real mystic, and yet he will be no more than a poet. It will be erroneous to call him a mystic, if he is found wanting in the essential characteristics of the mystic. Similarly, it will be erroneous to call a man of high moral sense only a mystic, because a mystic is necessarily highly moral. So the criteria will also help us in distinguishing a real mystic from a pseudo-mystic or a simulating mystic, between one who in spite of other qualifications is a God-realizer first and one who is inferred (and very often wrongly) to be a God-realizer because he has some unessential other qualities ; in short, between the essentially spiritual life and the mere life of imagination or intellect or good will or emotion.

Another feature of spiritual life we must note before proceeding to the delineation of the criteria is that the spiritual life consists in the silent enjoyment of God, and as such is ineffable, incommunicable and in a sense personal. We must accordingly have a distinction between the criteria as internal and as external. So far as the mystic himself is concerned, both the types will be useful to him ; but for others, who must be content with the observation of the mystic's behaviour, the external criteria

alone will be available. But here, as suggested above, there is the danger of a behaviourist confusing a mystic with a non-mystic, on account of the external behaviour being sometimes common to both. The supreme criterion must be internal ; and so in spiritual life, as in moral life according to Aristotle, the individual conscience alone will be the final judge of the progress that is achieved.

In this chapter, we shall deal mainly with the immediate effects or signs of realization ; we shall deal in the next with the actual mode of behaviour of a person who has realised God.

It is worth noting that a full-fledged mystic has, in spite of these criteria, a power to apprehend another mystic of his kind. As Tukārāma tells us, a saint alone knows the secret of another saint. We may simply remark that this transcendental power of knowing another of his type without the use of the criteria is probably the result of a constant unitive life with God. Rāmadāsa has put this very succinctly when, after equating Jñāna and Upāsana, he says negatively that God cannot be known by any one who does not know God. We have only to extend this argument and say that just as to know God one has to become God, to know a mystic, one has to become a mystic.

Leaving aside however this question of the transcendental power of finding out a mystic by another mystic, let us be content with the

finding and the discussion of the external and the internal criteria. To begin with the Psycho-physical criterion, *viz.*, the perfect indifference to the body and the bodily pleasures: As the body consists of the five elements and as the elements are due to Māyā, the mystic has never his eye on what happens to the body. Not that he does not take care of the body, or that he inflicts pain on himself by unnecessary mortification of the flesh, but he does not feel that his being consists of the material or physical self. Whether the body is fit or diseased, covered or naked, he is ever prepared to use it for the service of God. He knows that a sound body will be more fitted to do the service of God than a weak and diseased one; he may try his best to keep it fit; but, if unfortunately he finds the opposite, he does not regret it. Mustering courage on the contrary, he makes it deliberately fit for the cause of God. Come what may, this preparedness to use the body through thick and thin, through hunger, sickness, disease, pain, and all sorts of miseries for the Divine cause, constitutes the physical and the mental criterion of a person who has realized God. When Tukārāma says, "Let the body be torn in pieces, let the head be cut off, one must not give up the Name of God," he is exhibiting this utter indifference to the body. Almost all great mystics have shown this capacity and willingness to suffer in body.

This indifference to the body and whatever pertains to the body is possible in two ways: one, as a preparation for the Divine life; the other, as the result of it. There is naturally more of joy, ease, and confidence in the indifference shown to the body, when it is the result of an experience of God and His grace than when it is accepted deliberately by the aspirant, as the first step on the path of God. This joyful, natural indifference to the hedonistic values of life is the test of the presence of a higher life. The more the life of the Ātman, the less the life of the body, the greater the joy of the Ātmanic life, the greater the indifference to the flesh.

Natural control over the senses and the mind, and the easy overcoming of the temptations is the next criterion of a person who has found peace in God. By 'control' is not meant the ruthless suppression, but the calming down of the exuberance of the passions; by means of the contemplation of God. The mind cannot attend for a long time to two objects with equal zeal. It must choose one of the two, God or passions; and if God be the only object of the mind, then naturally the objects of the senses will lose their grip on the mind. Like the body, they too will be treated with indifference, and some of them even with contempt.

A contact with the mystical object is bound to affect one emotionally. This occurs



especially in the case of a novice, when he is attracted and filled with awe at the sight of the mystical vision, or when he hears the mystical sounds. The emotional stuff of the mind is churned, as it were, by the spiritual exercise of meditation on the Name of God, and so there is a complete and constant and, sometimes, violent shuffling and reshuffling of the emotions. That which is uppermost goes down to the bottom of the mind, and vice versa. Just as a stone thrown in water is the cause, not only of surface ripples, but also of the mud that is brought from the bottom to the surface, even so, the mind of the novice becomes sometimes full of evil and wicked thoughts, as if it is the result of meditation. But the Name of God has not only this negative function; it has the positive curative function also. No doubt, it exposes the evil to the light by dragging it out of the deep recesses of the heart; but it does not allow the evil to lie there on the surface of the mind, either to disturb the Sādhaka by its presence or to be expressed into action, as the psycho-analysts wish us to do. The Name of God has the peculiar power of transforming evil into good. It does not make the dirt go down once again to the bottom of the mind but transfigures it altogether into clean material.

Emergence of pure and refined emotions out of the dirty and the gross is, therefore, a great sign of God-realization and a continuous

practice of meditation. The Tāmāsa qualities are being transformed into the Rājāsa, the Rājāsa into the Sāttvika; and the Sāttvika again into those which are Supra-Sāttvika. The love felt for a concubine may be transformed into love for one's own wife; the love for wife into that for mother; and again, the love for mother into the love for God. Man gains spiritual energy by meditation on the Name, but also becomes in the beginning of his career extremely susceptible to the shocks of emotions. His whole emotional being is churned by the spiritual energy; and it is just possible that vulgar emotions may come to the surface of the mind, and the Sādhaka may succumb to them. The great art of spiritual Alchemy, whereby the transformation of emotions takes place, consists in a sincere, ardent longing for the grace of God, and a ceaseless meditation on His Name. When the mind becomes full of tender and noble emotions, when the entire life is gradually being trained to be utilized for the service of God, and when there arises the mystical experience as the result of intense meditation, the Sādhaka experiences one or more of what are known as the eight Sāttvika conditions of the body and the mind. They are, as the saints tell us, hair standing on end, perspiration, tremor, tears, joy, choking of the throat, the mystical silence, and long inspirations and expirations. Though these Aṣṭa Bhāvas are the results of meditation

and God-realization, they are, in a way, further useful in being the very conditions of spiritual progress. We cannot resist the temptation of quoting Tukārāma who is at his best in describing the effects of meditation and God-realization. "When I utter thy Name, my mind becomes composed. The tongue enjoys a stream of ambrosia. Good omens of all kinds take place. The mind is coloured in Thy vision, and becomes steady on Thy feet. Desires come to an end, and words come out of the mouth as of complete satisfaction. Happiness meets happiness, and there is no limit to blessedness. The evil passions are conquered : all the impulses are nipped in the bud by the power of the Name. Blessed is his body who utters the Name of God. It is itself a place of pilgrimage. By meditation on God all difficulties will vanish. Even the disease of life will vanish, not to speak of other smaller diseases. One will even be able to confer spiritual obligations upon others by uttering God's Name. The tongue soon gets averse to other kinds of flavours ; but the flavour of the Name increases every moment."<sup>1</sup>

The mystic alone, as a matter of fact, is his own judge to see how far he has progressed by reference to the spiritual signs mentioned above. The bee alone can appreciate the honey ; but the sweetness must be tasted and not imagined. That is why Rāmadāsa tells us

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in *Mahārāshtra*, pp. 320-321.

that "only then can a man be supposed to have reached the end of spiritual life, when he has personally known that all his sins have come to an end; when he has known that the round of births and deaths has come to a stop; when he has known both God and Self, and when he has experienced the extreme surrender of self to God, and when he comes to know who the All-doer is."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Mahārāshtra, p. 409.

## CHAPTER X

### AN IDEAL SAINT

AN enigma to the people of the world, the saint is known to the persons of his type. He is a puzzle, not because eccentricity is the essence of his life, but because the ordinary common standards of judging behaviour fall short in his case. He appears eccentric, queer, or even a lunatic or a mad man, as Mukundarāja or Tukārāma would put it; but this lunacy, madness or eccentricity is nothing but the index of the unique and extraordinary nature of the saint, which makes him always appear as head and shoulders above the common folk. As a matter of fact, he belongs to the Divine world, and is merely a sojourner in this world of men; he lives in the world, though he is not of the world. Like Plato's ideal man or the philosopher, he has his eye and interest, not so much on the objects of the senses, but in the transcendental vision or idea.

A man of the world, being just the opposite of the saint, has all his interests in the sensuous objects, and hardly any in the Divine world. Naturally, he is unable to understand the saints in the proper light, and so judges them wrongly. We very often find that the objects which

interest a man of commonsense do not interest a saint, that the joys and pleasures of the world are set at nought by him, and that, in short, the very standards which measure human worth and conduct, are found insufficient in his case. Not knowing the hidden treasure of Divine knowledge which the saint possesses, not knowing the reasons why his behaviour is inconsistent with the behaviour of the people of the world, the ordinary man hastily gives the erroneous verdict that the saint is an enigma or an eccentric personality. As a matter of fact, it is the man of the world himself who, having given himself wholly to the pursuit of the pleasures of the senses, has fallen away from the true centre of a life in God, and has described for himself a very different but limited circle of the sensuous life. Enigmatic or eccentric though it appears, let us see if we can first explain and justify the behaviour of a saint, and then make his saintliness the only standard of conduct for us all to accept.

The first and the foremost characteristic of a saint is that he finds abiding life and supreme peace in the life of the Ātman. As we have it in the Bhagavadgītā, he sports with the Ātman, lives in the Ātman and is pleased with the life in the Ātman. As a result of this he becomes inevitably endowed with other characteristics. Always looking at the vision of the Self and meditating on the Name of God, he forgets the world and his body, and is absolutely free

from the cares and anxieties about them. His body may move; yet his mind has become steadfast in God. The sole desire that he cherishes is to meditate ceaselessly on God and have a look at God; consequently, other desires forsake him. We become angry when we lose something, or do not get it even if we try; the saint never loses his spiritual treasure, and so has no cause to be angry. The vision of the Self being non-dual, he has no jealousy or quarrel with anybody; neither has he any cause for mourning or for having any temptation. The whole universe being filled with God, he is, so to say, in his own house, wherever he goes. He has truly become immortal by identification with God; what is there then of which he should be afraid? even of death itself? By the loss of consciousness, that he is the body he has, as it were, spread himself as wide as the sky. Just as the sky is not a hindrance to anybody, he too is soft and kind to all by his speech and actions. He is as good and holy as God, and is beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, opulence and poverty, etc. He is the incarnation of dispassion and has absolutely no desires.

Absolute dispassion or desirelessness, fearlessness and equanimity, and the attitude of spiritual indifference to the joys and miseries of the world are the prominent characteristics that arise from the Ātmanic life and constant meditation on God. The quality of dispassion

or desirelessness is not the mark of incapacity to enjoy, or of weakness, or effeminacy; neither is it a reaction of voluptuous indulgence in the pleasures of the senses. In spite of perfect physical capacity to enjoy, passionlessness for the pleasures of life arises as the natural outcome of a life steadfast in God, the contentment of which does not depend on a prior want. Besides, the dispassion observed in a saint is not of the same quality as perforce exhibited by a spiritual aspirant. The aspirant exercises a sort of control over his desires, in order to make meditation and Divine life at all possible; in a way, he runs away from the temptations and the passions that are likely to mislead him. In the case of the saint, on the other hand, the passions and temptations themselves may be said to be running away from him. Or just as the waters of the rivers lose all their violent force and speed when they meet the sea, similarly the passions and temptations in life lose all their sting when they touch the saint. There would be some sense in saying, as the upholders of the New Psychology would like to say, that the suppressed emotions of the sādḥaka, inasmuch as they are not properly expressed, lie waiting in the ante-chamber of the mind and that, when the proper moment arises, they rush forth and explode by way of reaction. These psychologists do not however know that whatever is suppressed on account of its being unhealthy and



uncongenial for the growth of spiritual progress is further burnt by the fire of meditation, and that whatever is healthy and fit to grow from the spiritual point of view, is actually grown and reaped into a harvest by the power of devotion, prayer and grace of God. This process of destruction and construction, of purification and illumination, goes on repeatedly, till the sādḥaka is transformed into Siddha. The saint in his attempt to identify himself with God, goes so far beyond the threshold of mind, that the language of an 'ante-chamber' or a 'force-chamber' becomes thoroughly inadequate. What can 'control' achieve for him now? It is not required of him now to cast off any desire, or passion or emotion. Any desire other than the desire for God will be put into the fire of devotion and meditation, and will be immediately transfigured into the Love of God.

Fearlessness is a quality that arises on account of the persistent contact with the Ātman; for the Ātman is the Fear of all fearful objects. The natural elements are fearful objects, because Death is the most fearful of all. The saint, who has lost every vestige of bodily consciousness on account of his complete identification with the immaculate Self or the Ātman, is not afraid of Death at all. Being convinced that the Ātman will never perish and that the body is to perish some day or other, he is always 'prepared' to lose his mortal

coil. Be it noted that fearlessness of death is compatible with the care which the saint may take to keep his body fit for the service of God. He knows the value of his body as an instrument ; but he does not make the slightest fetish about it.

It may be said that a martyr or a hero is equally fearless of death, and that fearlessness is not a quality peculiar to the saint. To a certain extent this is true ; but the motives in the two cases are entirely different. Death to the martyr and the hero is a means to prove the martyrdom or heroism ; to the saint, death is neither a means nor an end but an accident to meet which he is ever prepared. To others, it may appear as a means that will prosper his cause or as a justification of it. The death of Jesus may be justified as the last great event of the life of a martyr, which made the spread of Christianity possible. We are not concerned with what one may think about his death, but with the motive of Jesus in accepting the death which was thrust upon him. It must not certainly be to spread the Christian religion after his death. He chose to die because he was convinced that it was the will of God, and that the only duty he had to do was calmly to surrender to it. To the saint, death is an event to which he looks with perfect indifference. Whether it is the death of his own body or the death and destruction of others and of the perishable things, he is ever prepared for it,

because he has his heart fixed on the only imperishable thing, *viz.*, the Ātman.

It is this quality of fearlessness which is also manifested as boldness and courage in the saint. When ordinary men are cowed down by trying circumstances and perplexities in life, the saints gain in strength and rise superior to them. The spirit in them always conquers or tries to conquer the flesh. It never yields. In the moral and the spiritual fields their undaunted courage knows no bounds. With truthfulness as their spear and faith in God as their shield, they fight to the bitter end and very often become victorious. And even if they lose, they lose in the name of God and still are brave. The calamities and the perplexities in life are the occasions on which their saintly character is tested; as such, they show the greatest courage and forbearance with the world. Even an ordinary man, no doubt, shows courage and strength of will in order to prove his reputation and credit in society. A greater courage is required in conforming to moral ideals; especially when no reputation and credit are at stake. A man is all the more morally great when he behaves according to his moral convictions, notwithstanding his knowledge that he will be rewarded with the censure of society and the friends with whom he moves, and that he will, by so behaving, suffer a great material loss. The greatest courage, however, is required on the part of

the saint who joyfully withstands any difficulty that comes in his path to God. He derives his fearlessness and courage from his meditation on God, and uses it again for his moral and spiritual progress, though not for any immoral or anti-social purpose.

As this quality of fearlessness is ultimately rooted in righteousness and devotion, and as it grows along with spiritual experience and grace of God, the devotee or the true saint has no reason even to become afraid of God. "Why should a true servant be afraid of his master?" asks Tukārāma. The true servant reserves nothing for himself, but dedicates everything to his Lord. As a reward for his most faithful service, he receives in his hand the keys of all spiritual treasures and the Powers of God; and yet whenever there arises an occasion in his life when he should use the powers for his own personal sake, he sacrifices his self rather than use the powers and save it. His self-surrender is so complete that on all occasions he joyfully submits to the will of God. When such is the relation between the servant and the Master, obviously the ties which bind them together are of love and not of fear. When God speaks and offers boons, the devotee says, "not the boons, but Thyself, I want, my Lord", or as Rāmadāsa would put it, he asks of Rāma, "to turn himself into Rāma." Mystically speaking, when the saint has the vision of the Self, who should fear whom?

The mystical experience involves, no doubt, the element of fear and awe, as we have noticed in an earlier chapter. But the fear on further analysis will be found to be due to the ignorance that makes the mystical object appear as something "other," or as having the sense of "beyond" attached to it. Indeed, in a sense, the mystical object will perpetually remain as the 'other,' inasmuch as the finite can never become the Infinite, so long as the finite is embodied. And yet, in moments of ecstasy, the difference between the subject and the object is not felt as there is no bodily consciousness. The subject sees itself as the object, and is irresistibly drawn towards it. This drawing together of the two in the unitive life may be spoken of as 'love' in 'which are cancelled fear and ignorance. The saint and God, to return to our point, mutually love each other; and it may be said therefore that the original spiritual fear too dies or dissolves into the growing love of the life of unity. It is significant to note in this connection that Arjuna, who was extremely terrified at the sight of the Universal Ātman, was condemned by Kṛṣṇa for lack of courage. "Thou art ignorant of the great boon that I have conferred on thee by showing thee this vision," said Kṛṣṇa, "and thou art prattling like a terror-stricken man.... This infinite form of mine, from which all incarnations emanate, has never been hitherto heard or seen by anybody except thee.... Thou hast come upon an

ocean of nectar, and art afraid of being drowned in it; . . . even though this form might be terrific to look at, pin thy faith to this . . . Thou art afraid because thou hast never seen this form before; but forget not to exchange love for fear.”<sup>1</sup> Rāmadāsa too, while speaking of the various mystical sounds, says: “It makes one afraid greatly;” but in his verses addressed to mind, he tells us definitely that the infinite God is beyond all fear.

So the bond that binds the saint and God in the supreme act of ‘Advaitic’ devotion or the unitive life is of love. It does not, however, connote a cheap form of sentimentalism that ordinarily obtains between man and man, nor a sort of fashionable vague feeling of universal brotherhood and fellowship, nor again the sexual attraction that unfortunately goes by the same name. The love of a mystic that unites him with the God-head so far transcends these crude and perverse forms of it that there is nothing in common between them except the name; as Spinoza says in another context there is nothing in common between the constellation known as dog and the animal that barks. The Divine love is the unconquerable passion, which grows stronger and stronger by eating up all other emotions, including even the spiritual fear; it is the support and the culmination of all the emotions, and is therefore capable of giving rise to them all. It is on this account that the

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in Māhārāshtra, p. 68.

saint too, like God, is at once an object of fear and love, of awe and reverence. Himself being fearless and full of love, he is an object of fear and love to others. To fear and love him is to fear and love God, and to learn to conquer fear by love.

Equanimity is one of the greatest spiritual characteristics that emerge out of the supramental condition of the saint. When in the moments of ecstatic contemplation of God, the saint transcends the consciousness of body, mind, egoism and intellect, it is but natural that he equally turns a deaf ear to the praise and censure of the people. This does not mean that he is dull to understand the difference between the two. If there be anyone who very quickly understands the minutest differences of the meanings of words, it is the saint. Nor does it mean that like an aspirant he makes an effort to go beyond the dualities. What happens is that, like the Absolute, he too literally goes beyond the range of the dualities. From the point of view of the Absolute, the Ātman or the saint who tries to approximate to Him, the dualities are equally unreal, and so do not gain any point of contact with any one of them. To throw flowers at the Sun or to spit at him are, indeed, fundamentally two different things from the point of view of the attitude of reverence or otherwise, but are equally irrelevant and absurd from the point of view of the Sun who is beyond the reach of these

things. The saint being the Sun of Reality is never touched by the various dualities in life, such as pleasures and pains, honour and dishonour, and the like. Being shut up on all sides by the vision of the Self, nothing which is other than this vision has the power to eclipse the vision and disturb his mind.

The beautiful form of a woman, for example, is incapable of attracting the saint, for he has his eye on the vision of God, which comes in front of that beautiful form. While discussing the nature of the mystical object, we have noted that if a paper be held between the eye and the mountain on which the vision is presumed to have been seen, the perception of the mountain is intercepted, but not the vision of God. Curiously, the vision of God is seen on the paper, as it was previously seen on the mountain. Nothing which is sensuous in nature has got the capacity to eclipse the vision of God; rather the vision of God envelopes everything else. The form of the beautiful woman therefore is itself covered by the vision of God. The saint sees God first and the woman afterwards; the beauty of the flesh pales into insignificance before the beauty of the Divine form, and loses its painful sting of lust. He sees the Divine form on ugly things also, and so they do not create any shudder or repulsion in him. He is keen to appreciate the difference between beauty and ugliness, and yet in the presence of God, he is not affected by the reactions



of either of them. If, perchance, he finds that an ugly body hides in it a beautiful soul, and that a beautiful body hides in it an ugly one, he will be more attracted by the former than by the latter. He thus transcends the surface of ugliness and beauty, because he has his eye on the Divine beauty. Both the surface ugliness and beauty are unreal in the sense that both of them lack the moral and the spiritual values in them. That is why the saint is equally indifferent to both of them, and is pleased only with the contemplation of the beauty of God alone.

As opposed to this view of the equanimity and indifference of the saints in the Mahārāshtra towards the beauty of the skin, we have only to cite, by way of contrast, what some of the poet-mystics in the West think and feel about human and natural beauty. As Caroline E. Spurgeon points out, "Beauty, . . . the beauty of the face of a woman, is for Rossetti the actual and visible symbol of love." And again, "for Patmore," says Spurgeon, "it is in human love, but above all in wedded love, we have a symbol of the love between God and the Soul." As Patmore says in 'The Angel in the House' (Book II, prelude II): "And in the arithmetic of life, the smallest unit is a pair."<sup>1</sup> Now, it is one thing to become enamoured of the beauty of the face of a woman, or ardently to hanker after wedded love, and another thing to equate

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<sup>1</sup> Mysticism in English Literature, pp. 47, 48 & 49.

beauty and love to Divine beauty and to the Divine union between God and man. Rossetti and Patmore appear to have been aware of only one thing, *viz.* the appreciation of human beauty and human love. The saint is aware of both, the human and the Divine love and beauty. The poet is aware of the one alone, and so makes the fallacy of deifying and immortalizing the same in imagination, while the mystic is aware of both and so makes the difference between the two. However poetic and imaginative the idealization of human love and beauty may be, the mystic instantaneously visualizes the decay of it, and inasmuch as he has the direct experience of the Divine love and beauty, he will never confuse the human and the Divine.

—The argument does not improve, even if it be said that the human love and beauty are symbols or aspects of the Divine love and beauty. As Plato says, they may, at best, suggest to us the incomparably sublime love and beauty of God; but nothing that is sensuous and sensual can ever be truly considered as a symbol or aspect of the non-sensuous or the spiritual in nature. The experience of the beauty and love of God is possible only by the way of meditation on God; no amount of heightening, without such meditation, of the human love and beauty makes it possible. A mystic who has seen a beautiful form of God may be reminded of it, by seeing the very beautiful face of a woman;

but one who has had no vision of God can hardly say that He is beautiful like a beautiful woman. Similarly, a mystic who has the experience of ecstasy, rapture and the grace of God, may, with some excuse, use as illustration and by way of remote analogy for the intellectual understanding of others the wedded love as a symbol of the love of God; but it would be a travesty of facts for one, who has had no such experience, to suggest that the two types of love are of the same kind. As Bergson suggests in his 'Two Sources of Morality and Religion,' the word 'love' which is indiscriminately used by poets and novelists has been first borrowed from the vocabulary of the mystics. The love that the mystic feels for God and God feels for the mystic is an undying bond while the 'beauty' of God is an undying experience.

We may note in this connection that unlike the nature-poets, the saint is a pan-theist, with stress on the word, Theos. The poet too is known as a mystic of the pantheistic type, but generally he lays the stress on the word 'pan' and not on 'Theos.' The poet becomes aware of the things of this world first, and then of the fact that it is, to use the words of William Wordsworth, "informed with the spirit of God." According to Rāmadāsa, the saint who has seen the source of the great river of life by swimming against the current has become one with the Transcendent Reality; to him the

whole of the perceptible world is nothing but a dream. The world as denoted by the word 'pan' loses itself so completely in the 'Theos' that only the Theos remains. And in the mystical quest the Theos too is no longer as something 'other' but the self of the saint as being realized. Naturally, only after the realization of God and not before, can it be truly said that the whole world is lit up with the glory of God. As Thomas Traherne says, "You never enjoy the world aright, till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars,....till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world. The world is a mirror of infinite beauty; yet no man sees it. It is a temple of majesty, yet no man regards it. It is a region of Light and Peace."<sup>1</sup>

Here, too, the confusion is made by those who are poets only to become aware of the beauty of Nature, and, so to define it, that it will appear as the beauty of God. It is Socrates who said long ago that the trees and the outside Nature cannot teach us anything regarding our own nature. No amount of appreciation of natural beauty will give you awareness of the Divine beauty. It may arouse in you the sense of sublimity and grandeur as it did in Kant and led him to believe in a Being

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by E. Herman: *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, p. 209.

that was responsible for it. The saint may not go this way and may not philosophize at all; and yet he will be directly able to experience that God is beautiful, and as the mantle of His beauty falls on Nature, experience afterwards that Nature too is beautiful.

Contradictions are, as we have seen, the necessary moments in the life of the Absolute Being. Faithfully, though approximately, mirroring this life, the ideal saint too presents apparent contradictions in his behaviour which unfortunately irritates the man of commonsense and consistency. Like Aristotle's God, he himself remains 'unmoved, but moves the world.' As Rāmadāsa points out, he lives in the mountains and caves and cares for the good of the world; lives in the world and is yet not of it; lives in the company of the saints as also of the people of the world and holds conversations with them, but never breaks his silence or solitude. He may be garrulous but is always free from untruth; though looking shy and feeble, he is a tower of strength and courage; possesses childlike simplicity along with most mature wisdom and shrewdness; looks like a madman and yet is most consistent in thought, speech and actions. He is extremely mild on account of compassion and love, but extremely cruel and severe against the arrogant and the wicked. As Tukārāma says, the saint will give away even the loin-cloth from his body, but will strike a rod on the head of a

wicked person, if occasion arises. Though he is indifferent to the joys and the miseries of the world, so far as he himself is concerned, he is the first man who becomes pained by the sufferings of others, and finds happiness in their happiness. He takes the utmost care to see that he does not receive any obligations from others, but himself behaves with the conviction that the mission of his life is to do spiritual good unto others. He does not allow others to imagine his condition, though he penetrates into the minds of others. Knowing that there is a difference between the devotee and God, just as there is a difference between the full moon and the moon of the previous day, he always behaves as an humble servant of God; and therefore he does not ask for anything but remains content with whatever is given to him by God.

It is sometimes said that the person who has gone beyond the domain of the qualities is not bound by any kind of positive or negative rules. He may behave, it is contended, in any way he likes, and that the question of morality and immorality is irrelevant from the point of view of the Ātmanic life. As already remarked twice, we have again to point out that there will be substantially no spiritual progress without the support of moral life, just as there would be no progress of moral life and no perfection in it without spiritual progress. The saint, therefore, can never be indifferent to the accepted moral code of his society, though, in

a way, he lives a life which goes beyond both morality and immorality. True, in a way, the moral and the immoral life are both unreal when compared with the spiritual life; but the degree of unreality of an immoral life is infinitely greater than that of the moral life. That three plus two make four is, no doubt, a false proposition and that three plus thirteen make four is just another false proposition. But because both are false, it does not follow that both the propositions are equally false; the degree of falsity of the second proposition is far greater than that of the first. Obviously, the saint will avoid the immoral path and stick to the path of morality, because, in the first place, that makes the spiritual progress possible; secondly because morality itself is a necessary manifestation of the spiritual life; and thirdly, the life of the saint serves as an example for the ordinary people. Those who want deliberately to lead an immoral life under the guise of spiritual activity commit the sin of misleading the people and of putting a stop to the life spiritual.

There has been much dispute regarding the superiority or otherwise of the contemplative type of mystic over the activistic one. This is altogether an idle question, the futility of which has been shown by Prof. Ranade, according to whom there is a temperamental difference between one mystic and another. Contemplation and activity are not incompatible with

each other ; the fact is that some one is more contemplative than active, another more active than contemplative. Contemplation itself is the most intense activity of the spiritual kind. Therefore those who oppose the contemplative type to the activist one, and suggest by way of implication that the contemplative is a mere visionary, a recluse, or an inactive, passive spectator, look only at the superficial, external side of the mystical life. Those who are capable of appreciating it look to the internal side of the mystical life, and therefore find absolutely no contradiction between contemplation and activity. In an ideal saint, as Rāmādāsa says, contemplation and activity are beautifully combined; and so he advises us, as a preliminary step, to achieve this happy combination to lead a life in which they alternate with each other.

If realization of God is the highest and the main purpose of human life, and if meditation on God's Name is the only means of achieving it, any other activity which is not supported by the active life of meditation, or which does not lead to increase the spiritual life, is, as the saints consider, unworthy of being resorted to. There is nothing greater than God, as Rāmādāsa says. Therefore the saint considers that the greatest sin of which a man is capable is to forget the Name of God. After repeating the Name of God for seven years Abu Sayad says, " At last, every atom of me began to cry



aloud 'Allah!' 'Allah!' 'Allah!' "<sup>1</sup> Why seven years? Seventy-seven years, nay the whole span of life must be given to the meditation on the Name of God. It is this ceaseless meditation that constitutes real *Punya*, which has the power to make God manifest himself constantly before our eyes and other sense-organs, in all possible ways of Form, Beauty, Glory, Power, etc. It was the acquisition of this *Punya* that made, as the story goes, the bones of the dead body of *Gorā Kumbhāra* reverberate the Name of *Vitthala*. How is it possible that such a full-fledged mystic should be contaminated by Godless activities? He is perfectly *Āptakāma*; he is the *Saṅga Brahman* from whom doubts and actions fall away automatically. And yet whatever he does, he does it as the work of God. If there be anybody who should be designated as *Nishkāma Karma-Yogī*, it is the mystic alone and none else; for he has dedicated everything to God and has nothing to ask from Him, except the boon that his meditation on the Name of God should not cease on any account.

Verily, such a saint is the God incarnate, an *Avatāra*; he alone can say to the world that they should leave all and follow him, if they wish to realize God. It matters very little who is the particular saint we follow; for though divers saints look different physically, they are one spiritually. To worship one

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Nicholson: *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 9.

of them is to worship them all. Let us then, for instance, be either Jñāneśvara-centric or Rāmādāsa-centric, if at all we wish to follow and experience the secrets of spiritual life.'

### *Postscript*

## THE PERPETUAL STRUGGLE

As there is no finality to spiritual progress, there will be lifelong struggle of the finite to assimilate itself with the Infinite. Rare is the man who has gone beyond to the other side of the stream of life. God can never be known in His entirety. He is infinite, and man can only hope to realize a very small portion of this Infinite Mystical Reality.

The struggle includes the fear of relapse into sensual or immoral life as also the anxiety to maintain and enhance the moral and the spiritual progress. The struggle is all the more severe for the devotee; God tests him and as there are many pit-falls such as dissipation, sexual passion, desire for wealth and power, fickleness, doubt, unbelief, there occur reverses in the spiritual journey.

As the result of disappointments, reverses, lapses, and the state of being deserted both by God and friends and relatives, there comes the second Dark Night of the Soul which is darker than the first. Prayer and grace alone will save the devotee out of it. The first night comes before illumination and conversion; it

indicates mere helplessness and ignorance. The second comes after illumination and is all the more dreadful because the devotee, though he now knows the path of God and is not so helpless as he was before, yet feels that he is unable both to avoid the pit-falls and to make the progress. The struggle by itself is however extremely valuable. It is its own fruit. The Spirit ultimately gains the victory over the flesh.

The moment there is complete surrender of the finite will and the acceptance of the Divine will there will be an end to all doubts and misery.

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